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The Holy Church

Throughout all the World.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL FOX, M. A.,

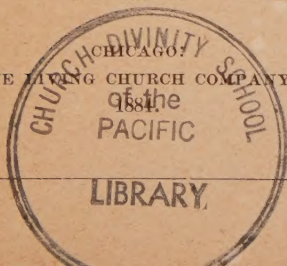
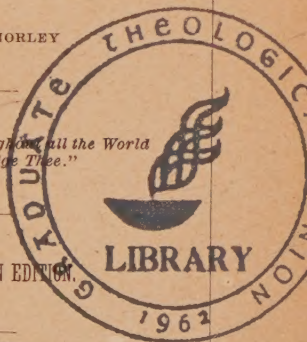
RECTOR OF MORLEY

*"The Holy Church throughout all the World
doth acknowledge Thee."*

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

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The Holy Church Throughout all the World.

INTRODUCTION.

WILLIAM. Papa, you told me what I wanted to know about the Noble Army of Martyrs: will you tell me something about the Holy Church?

MR. HERBERT. What is it which you wish me to explain?

WILLIAM. I do not quite understand the meaning of "The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee:" will you please to tell us what it means?


MR. HERBERT. Would you like me to explain it in the same way I did the Noble Army of Martyrs?

WILLIAM. Oh, yes, pray do.

MR. HERBERT. Very well; to-morrow evening I will begin, and I will first tell you what the word Church means, and then show you what the Church has passed through, and how our Blessed LORD has ever fulfilled His gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

The Church.

"The holy Jerusalem,
From highest heaven descending,
And crown'd with a diadem
Of angel bands attending;
The living City built on high,
Bright with celestial jewelry."

HE word Church has several different meanings, but they all have some reference to the salvation of mankind through Jesus Christ. That beautiful old building, with its lofty spire, and walls covered with ivy, which was raised many hundred years ago to the honor of God, and set apart by the Bishop to God's service,—and where we still often meet our fellow Christians to hear God's holy Word, and to pray to Him,—that building, as you know, is called a Church. Now in this sense the word church means the House of God. But this is only one of the ways in which the word is used. We first find the word Church used in the Holy Scriptures, and it is there applied to those who believe that

Jesus Christ was the Son of God; and that He came down from heaven, and became a man, in order that He might save us from everlasting punishment. It was in this sense that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, sent his greeting to Priscilla and Aquila, and to the church which was in their house.*

When you are older, and learn Greek, you will find that the word which we translate Church, means an assembly of people called together. A better word could not be used; for St. Peter says that God Himself has called Christians out of darkness into His marvellous light. And he says that God did this, in order that they might show forth God's praises.† It is in this way that the word Church is used when we speak of "the holy Church throughout the world."

There are, however, some other meanings belonging to the word Church, which I will mention, before I explain to you how the holy Church throughout the world acknowledges God.

* Rom. xvi. 3, 5.

† 1 St. Peter, ii. 9.

The word is sometimes applied to the Christians who dwell in a particular city, as for instance, St. Paul speaks of the Church of God which is at Corinth;* and St. John, in the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation, mentions the Church of Ephesus, the Church in Smyrna, the Church in Pergamos, the Church in Thyatira, the Church in Sardis, the Church in Philadelphia, and the Church of the Laodiceans. These churches are usually called the seven churches of Asia, they being in that part of Asia called Asia Minor. Now here, as you observe, the word church is applied to each city or place over which a Bishop presided.

Then, again, there is a still more comprehensive meaning attached to the word church, and that is where we speak of the whole world being divided into two great branches, called the Eastern Church and the Western Church. This division was caused by a violent and foolish quarrel between the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Bishop of Rome about eight hundred years ago, and it

* 1 Cor. i. 2.

has continued ever since. Thus the Eastern and the Western Churches contain all the other branches of Christ's Church.

But we must now retrace our steps to the origin of Christ's holy Church, which throughout the world doth acknowledge God. Jesus Christ Himself was the founder of it, and began it by calling to Him twelve disciples, whom also He named apostles. These He endowed with powers to cast out unclean spirits, and to heal the sick. I would have you particularly observe that Jesus called them; they were therefore an assembly of men called together, or in other words, a church. Their Lord and Master commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give."*

They immediately obeyed the com-

* St. Matt. x. 5-8

mand which they thus received, and went about preaching the Gospel and healing those that were sick. The wonderful works which their Lord and Master did, caused many to believe in Him, and to listen with teachable minds to those things which they taught. It was indeed no wonder that great multitudes were convinced and converted by the miracles which Jesus did. The wonder would have been if they had not been convinced. To those who were eyewitnesses of our Blessed Lord's miracles, they must have been—except in a few instances of great depravity of heart—irresistible proofs that He was a teacher sent from God. When they saw Him give eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, health to the sick, and even life to the dead, by speaking only a few words, what other conclusion could they possibly draw than that which the centurion did in the awful hour of the Crucifixion, "Truly this was the Son of God."*

For three years our Lord and His disciples were thus employed; and they, by so doing, laid the foundation of that holy

* St. Mark xv. 39.

Church which throughout the world doth acknowledge God.

It was a trying time to the disciples when they saw the enemies of their beloved Master prevail against Him. Strong as their faith had been, which caused them to forsake all their worldly goods and follow Christ, it now for a little time began to waver. Sorrow seemed for a season to throw a cloud over their understandings; and the faith of even the Roman soldier to whom I have alluded, appeared to be greater than theirs. But after the Resurrection their confidence returned. They were then more than ever persuaded that Jesus was "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and after they had witnessed His glorious ascension to heaven, they were prepared to suffer the loss of all things, and to lay down their lives for His sake.

The number originally chosen by Christ was now reduced to eleven by the death of Judas Iscariot, who, when he saw what he had done in betraying his Lord and Master into the hands of His enemies, went and hanged himself.* The

* St. Matthew, xxvii. 5

eleven, therefore, wishing to complete the number originally chosen by their Lord, called together the small assembly of Christians which had been formed at Jerusalem, consisting of only one hundred and twenty persons. They then selected two men remarkable for their piety and faith as worthy candidates for this sacred office. These men were Matthias and Barnabas; and after praying that God would show which of the two He had chosen, they gave forth their lots, and the lot falling upon Matthias, he was numbered with the eleven Apostles. If they had then been left to themselves, it is possible that their natural weakness might have shrunk from the trials which awaited them, when, in obedience to their Master's parting charge, they went forth into all the world, and preached the gospel to every creature.* God was, therefore, pleased to strengthen them by His Holy Spirit, which descended upon them on the day of Pentecost. On that day, which was a solemn feast, kept at Jerusalem in commemoration of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai,

* St. Mark, xvi. 15

the apostles were with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This was indeed a wonderful display of the mighty power of God. No sooner had the Spirit thus descended upon them, than they were filled with courage and holy zeal. The strangers who had come to Jerusalem to keep the feast were filled with amazement at what they saw and heard. They knew that the Apostles had been poor fishermen in Galilee, simple and unlearned; when, therefore, they heard them speak in their languages, they said, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God."*

* Acts ii. 1-11.

Some there were who were so hardened in their hearts that they even dared to mock the Apostles, and say that they had been drinking wine. It is shocking to think that men could be so wicked. Their mockery, however, did no harm; God brought good out of it. He overruled it, as He often does the ways of wicked men, to His own glory. The charge of drunkenness caused St. Peter to stand up, and defend himself and the eleven from the shameful charge which had been brought against them. In the course of his address he showed that what they had witnessed was the fulfilment of prophecy; that Jesus Christ was the Son of God; and that it was on this account that the Holy Ghost had visibly descended upon them, enabling them to speak in the manner they had heard. Many a heart was touched by the words of the Apostle, and consequently many earnestly inquired what they must do.

Then St. Peter told them they must repent, and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and that they, too, should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. "For," said he,

“the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” He added many other words of exhortation; and those who listened to him were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

This was indeed a very wonderful increase from the hundred and twenty persons who only a few days before had formed the body of Christ’s Church ! It must have made a great impression on the minds of some who did not at first venture to join the new religion. They very naturally entertained misgivings with regard to the religion in which they had been brought up, and these, probably, soon after joined the Apostles, because the number of believers was soon increased to five thousand. In all this, we clearly see the hand of God. He blessed the words of His Apostles, so that they sank deeply into the hearts of those who listened to them attentively. No doubt the miracles which they were enabled to perform influenced some, and convinced them that

men who were endued with such wonderful powers, were commissioned from on high to proclaim truths which had never been heard of before.

You now see the beginning of that Holy Church, which was designed by its Almighty Founder to spread throughout the world, and to afford rest and comfort to the weary and heavy laden.

The Church, therefore, is that holy society which was commenced by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and intended to continue until the end of the world. Jesus Christ promised that He would, although unseen by us, be ever present with His Church. His words were, when He commissioned His Apostles to go and teach all nations, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* More than eighteen hundred years have passed since this gracious declaration was made, and many changes have taken place in the world, but the promise remains sure and steadfast. During this long period, the changing fortunes of the world have more or less influenced the outward condition of the Church.

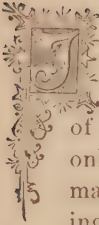
*St. Matthew 28, v. 20.

It will be very interesting to trace the progress of the Church, from its early days until the present time; because we shall see how wonderfully God accomplishes His purposes. How surely He fulfils His word, and how often He makes the wrath of man subservient to His own glory! The more we are convinced of this, the more should we value the privilege which we enjoy, of being members of that holy society to which we belong, and into which we were incorporated in our Baptism, wherein we were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. If we value our privilege, we shall endeavor to improve it, so that, having finished our course in Christ's Church militant here below, we may be advanced to His Church triumphant in Heaven.

We have hitherto traced the Church till it consisted of five thousand souls. My next sketch will show a much larger increase, in which I purpose showing you how much the blessed Apostles accomplished before they rested from their labors.

The Apostles.

"To distant lands His heralds fleet,
By God's mysterious presence led;
How beauteous are their passing feet,
Like morn upon the mountain spread."

 F you recollect, the number of those who were the true followers of Jesus Christ at the time of His Ascension into Heaven, was only one hundred and twenty. This may, perhaps, strike you as surprising, but it is easily accounted for by the fact, that the Holy Spirit of God had not yet been vouchsafed. No sooner, however, had the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles, than a great change with regard to numbers was effected. The hundred and twenty was increased to three thousand on the Day of Pentecost; and their number was again increased, as you have already heard, to five thousand. This was the Lord's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

The first commission which Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles, was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and although before His Ascension He enlarged that commission, when He bade them "go and teach all nations," yet the first exercise of their ministry was confined to their own country, and to their own city, Jerusalem. In that city the Apostles founded the first Christian Church.

You must not suppose that all the Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem became Christians, and joined the new Church. This was far from being the case. Many still clung to the religion which Moses had taught their forefathers; and although they were again and again shown that all which Moses had taught was only to prepare the way for Christ, and therefore when He appeared, was to be at an end, they would not forsake the religion in which they had been brought up. Their pride was a great hindrance in the way of their conversion. Their country had for many years been under the dominion of Rome, which was at that time the mistress of the world.

From mistaking the character, as well as office of the Messiah, they had fondly hoped that He would appear as a mighty conqueror, and restore to the Jews the glory which once so brightly shone around them. Instead, therefore, of welcoming so great a man, they were told that the Messiah was the son of lowly parents, and that He had not where to lay His Head. And when at length He was crucified, they closed their eyes still more against the truth.

All this accounts for many refusing to join the Apostles. But, as you have already heard, many did join them, and continued steadfast in their doctrine and fellowship. Their numbers continued increasing daily; and the opposition which they encountered from the Jewish rulers, was beneficial to their cause.

The miracles which they performed in proof of their Divine commission, caused them to be regarded with much reverence; and when they caused a dreadful punishment to be inflicted on Ananias and Sapphira, great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many

as heard these things.* This, however, caused multitudes, both of men and women, to believe.

Sometimes the wickedness of man was allowed to prevail, and the truth appeared to suffer. I am alluding to the death of St. Stephen, who, as you know, was cruelly put to death by stoning. He was not an Apostle, but was one of those whom the Apostles appointed to assist them in their daily ministrations. There were seven men appointed to this office; they were called Deacons, which means Ministers; and St. Stephen appears to have been the most distinguished among them. He was a man full of faith and great power, and performed many miracles among the people, which provoked the wrath and indignation of some of the philosophers of those times, and caused them to dispute with him. When they were not able to resist the wisdom with which he spake, they hired false witnesses, to charge him with things which he had never done, and they brought him before their rulers. It must have been a sad sight to see that

*Acts v. 1—2.

holy man stand, as his Divine Master had done before, in the presence of judges who were determined to destroy him. His trial was a mockery; and he was shamefully hurried away from the Council, and stoned.

There was one assisting at that cruel scene, who afterwards became the most active supporter of those truths which he was now endeavoring to destroy. I mean Saul, at whose feet the false witnesses who assisted at the stoning of St. Stephen, laid their clothes.* He is better known by the name of St. Paul, and of him I shall have something more to say.

The death of St. Stephen was followed by a persecution of the Christians, in the hope that the religion of Jesus Christ would be entirely destroyed. The means, however, which were taken to destroy it, caused it to be more widely known. The cruelties which were inflicted on the Christians, caused them to be scattered abroad; and wherever they went, there they carried their religion, and increased the number of believers.

*Acts vii. 58.

Among those who were particularly active against Christianity, was Saul. He, we are told, made havoc of the Church, and was on his bloody errand to Damascus, when it pleased the Almighty to arrest him in his mad career. As he was on the way, suddenly a great light from heaven shined round about him, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord said, "I am Jesus, Whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

The mind of the persecutor was at once changed, and he tremblingly inquired, saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

He was then told to go into the city of Damascus, near which all this had taken place; and there he remained three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. At the end of the three days, the Lord directed a holy man named Ananias, who dwelt at Damascus, to go to Saul, and lay his hands on him, that he might recover his sight. He not only

by these means received his sight, but was also filled with the Holy Ghost.* This was so wonderful an event, that many doubted the reality of it, and could scarcely be persuaded that he who had once destroyed in Jerusalem all which called on the Name of Christ, was now a firm believer in that Name. His former friends were now highly exasperated against him, and even sought to take away his life; but the same power which had changed his mind, now preserved his life. The disciples at Damascus sent him away secretly to Jerusalem, where he was received by the Apostles. And from thence he departed to Tarsus, his native city, where he remained some time.

During these wonderful events, the twelve were actively engaged in making known the religion of their crucified Lord. The labors of St. Peter are especially noticed in the Acts of the Apostles at this time, and probably in consequence of being the first Apostle to receive a converted heathen into the Church of Christ. It was a very im-

*Acts ix. 1—17.

portant circumstance, because St. Peter was assured, in a vision, that the Gentiles were no longer to be regarded as strangers; but that the whole world was now to be considered as one fold, of which the Lord Jesus Christ was the Shepherd. It arose from a devout Roman soldier named Cornelius, who had long feared God, and given much alms to the poor, falling into a vision in which he saw an Angel of God coming to him, and saying that his prayers and alms were accepted by God, and that he must send for one Simon, whose surname was Peter, and who was then living at Joppa, and that he would tell him what he must do. Cornelius accordingly despatched two of his servants and a soldier to fetch St. Peter. On the following day, as the three men were approaching Joppa, St. Peter went at his usual hour on the house-top to pray, and fell into a trance, in which he was taught the important truth to which I have alluded—I mean, that the Jews and Gentiles were no longer to look upon themselves as distinct in the sight of God. While St. Peter was wondering

in himself what the vision which he had seen could mean, the strangers came to the house where he dwelt, and inquired for him, and delivered their message. The next day St. Peter departed with them, and on the day following they arrived at Cæsarea, where Cornelius was waiting to receive them. He was overjoyed on beholding the Apostle, and fell down at his feet; but St. Peter took him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man" St. Peter said he had come because God had showed him that he should not call any man common or unclean. Cornelius then explained his vision, and St. Peter, at once recognizing the mighty hand of God, addressed the people who were assembled, and while he spoke the Holy Ghost fell on all those who listened to him. This was a wonderful sight to the Jews, and convinced them that their superiority no longer existed. St. Peter then baptized these new believers, and Gentiles were openly received into the Church of Christ.

Tidings of these things soon reached the ears of the Apostles at Jerusalem; and when St. Peter afterwards went up

to the holy city, his proceedings were rather called in question; but when he had explained all the circumstances, they held their peace and glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." *

Many years had not elapsed when St. James, the son of Zebedee, was called upon to follow his Lord in the path of suffering. His innocence could not shield him from the cruelty of Herod, the grandson of that Herod who sought to have slain Jesus, soon after His birth. Herod caused him to be put to death; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he seized St. Peter, intending to inflict the same punishment on him. But St. Peter was delivered from the prison in a wonderful manner. The Lord sent His angel, who caused the chains to fall from the Apostle's hands; and when they had passed the watchmen without being discovered, they came to the iron gate which led into the city. This heavy gate, whose creaking hinges had chilled the heart of many a prisoner as it closed upon him, now opened of its

* Acts xi, 18.

own accord, and enabled the intended victim of Jewish cruelty to return to his delighted friends. But God not only delivered His oppressed servant; He also punished his persecutor. Shortly afterwards this same Herod was smitten with a loathsome disease, and was eaten up of worms!

We now find that Saul began to exert himself in the service of Christ; and at first St. Barnabas was his companion. These two travelled as far as Cyprus, where they converted a ruler by smiting a sorcerer named Elymas with blindness. On their return they came to Antioch, a city in Pisidia, where Saul, who now had taken the name of Paul, addressed the people, many of whom were so much pleased with what they had heard, that they begged to have the same words preached to them on the next Sabbath. This provoked the envy of the Jews, and they so far prevailed as to cause the Apostles to shake off the dust of their feet against them,* and to depart to Iconium. They had, however, made many converts, who contributed to in-

*St. Matthew x. 14.

crease the numbers of Christ's Church.

In Iconium they also converted many, but the persecution which the Jews stirred up drove them away; and they next visited Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia. There they performed miracles, which made a great impression on the minds of the people; but the Jews still pursued them, and nearly caused them to be put to death. He, however, Whose servants they were, protected them and blessed their labors.

The Church was now greatly enlarging her borders; and, in order to supply their places when absent, we find the Apostles ordained elders in every church.* At this early period men began to dispute about religion, and compelled the two Apostles to go to Jerusalem with some of their opponents, to have their differences settled. The Apostles, therefore, assembled together at Jerusalem, and formed the first council of the Church. St. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, presided; and when the council broke up, they sent chosen men with St. Paul and St. Barnabas to Anti-

*Acts xiv. 23.

och, to heal the differences which had arisen. A dispute unhappily soon afterwards arose between St. Paul and his fellow-traveller, which caused them to pursue a different course. For the future, Silas was the companion of St. Paul, and St. Barnabas was accompanied by St. Mark.

In the course of their future travels they visited many places in Greece, and Asia Minor, and the neighboring islands, making converts wherever they went, and establishing a branch of the Church in every city they visited

Ephesus, celebrated of old for its magnificent temple dedicated to Diana, was for two years the abode of St. Paul, and there the rage of the worshippers of the heathen goddess very nearly cost the Apostle his life. After the tumult had subsided, he departed into Greece. There he remained about three months, and returned into Asia Minor through Macedonia; and at length arrived at Jerusalem, where great troubles awaited him. He had scarcely reached the holy city before an assault was made upon him in the Temple, from which he was

rescued by the interference of the soldiers. He had done nothing wrong; he had not spoken a word against the Temple, or against Moses, or against any of those things which the unconverted Jews regarded with reverence. His offence consisted in being a Christian, and in being actively employed in spreading abroad the Gospel of Christ. He was, however, for some time in prison, and in order to save himself from falling into the hands of a number of men who had agreed to kill him, he appealed to Cæsar, which meant that his trial should take place before the Emperor at Rome. Accordingly he was sent to Rome, and on his voyage was shipwrecked at Melita, the ancient name of Malta. The following spring he was conveyed to Rome in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isles, and at length he reached the city of Rome. The Emperor's name was Nero, who, as you know, was a very cruel man; but God delivered His servant from his hands. After remaining at Rome two years, he was set at liberty. During these two years he was employed in preaching the kingdom of God, and

teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. *

Now in all this we see the wonderful providence of God. Rome at that time was visited by people from every part of the world ; and thus converts would carry away to many a distant country the glad tidings of salvation.

In the epistle which St. Paul afterwards addressed to the Romans, he speaks of the wide extent of his travels, so that there was probably no part of the civilized world which he did not visit.

The Acts of the Apostles do not give us any account of the labors of the other Apostles, except those which I have mentioned ; but early writers state that they were all employed in their Master's service, going in obedience to His commands to all nations, and at length suffering martyrdom for His sake. Thus the Church, which was founded by Christ on His twelve Apostles, and which at His death contained only about one hundred and twenty persons, was so far extended during the next thirty or forty years as to


*Acts xxviii. 31.

have reached nearly every part of the known world.

The Apostles were men of like feelings and infirmities with ourselves ; but they were strengthened, and supported, and guided by the Holy Spirit of God. It was under His guidance that they appointed others to preside over the different branches of the Church, and to fill their places after their death, Of these I will give you some account on another occasion.

The Fathers.

“Proof of His love, and pledge of thine,
He bears the mission from Thy shrine,
Thy staff to hold;
The charge of Thine own ransomed sheep,
Which Thee the Father gave to keep,
And guard Thy fold.”

 ANY a weeping eye beheld the sad torments which the Apostles underwent in proclaiming the Gospel, and defending it against those who were bitterly opposed to it. The ingenuity of man was often taxed in order to devise a still more cruel death than any which had previously been known. The faint-hearted were sometimes discouraged by what they saw, and were almost inclined to doubt the truth of God's Word, when they beheld His servants, and especially those whom Jesus Christ had chosen, exposed to such grievous torments. But in this, as in everything else, God's ways are not like our ways; and what seemed likely

to destroy His religion, was, in fact, the best way to spread it in the world.

The firmness with which they met death in its most cruel forms, showed how fully they were convinced of the truths they taught ; and this encouraged others to exert themselves in His service, who had promised to reward with a crown of life every one who remained faithful unto death. *

But before the Apostles suffered martyrdom, they had, as I before remarked, appointed men to preside over new branches of the Church, and who would supply their place when they were no more. They had received their authority from Christ Himself, when He said, "Peace be unto you : as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." † Besides, it was necessary for the continuance of the Church, that there should be a succession of men, invested with full power to impart to others the office and authority which they had received. The last words spoken by our Blessed Lord which St. Matthew recorded, were, "Lo ! I am with you alway, even unto the end

* Rev. ii. 10.

† St. John xx. 21.

of the world." This, alone, would prove that the Ministry of the Church should continue as long as the world.

Although the Apostolic office was communicated by the Apostles to other men, the name was limited to those who were originally chosen by Jesus Christ. and to St. Matthias and St. Paul, who were appointed by the express interference of the Lord. The word "Apostle," means one who is sent, as a messenger ; and was, therefore, used to express those who were invested with a Divine commission. The successors of the Apostles were called Bishops ; a name which has ever since been used in the Church, to denote the highest orders of ministers.

The early Bishops and other Christian writers whose works have come down to us, are commonly known by the name of the Fathers. Many of their works are very voluminous, and are of great value to us. Indeed, their opinions have, in all ages of the Church, had great weight in settling disputed points of doctrine ; and even those who will not bow to their decisions, cannot but bear testimony to their untiring zeal and industry. St. Ber-

nard, who lived in the twelfth century, is considered to be the last of the Fathers, as after his time, a different style of writing prevailed among Christian authors.

We, who live so many years after our Blessed Lord and His Apostles were upon earth, are very much indebted to the Fathers for many things which they have handed down to us. Some of them lived and conversed with the Apostles, and therefore must have been well acquainted with the opinions and conduct of those holy men. The statements which they have left behind them in their writings, throw great light upon the Apostles' practice. The Scriptural account of their proceedings ended about the year 64, that is, rather more than thirty years after our Saviour's Ascension. St. Paul gives a little information on this subject after the Acts of the Apostles closes; but as he soon afterwards suffered martyrdom, even his writings would have given us only an imperfect account of the proceedings of the Church during the first century of her existence. Besides continuing the

history of the Church from the time when the Acts of the Apostles close, they furnish us with unquestionable evidence of what doctrines were received and held in the primitive Church. So that while we believe that all doctrines necessary for our salvation are revealed in the Holy Scriptures, we consider the explanations and commentaries of the Fathers highly useful, if not absolutely necessary for the proper understanding of those doctrines. It is said—but there is no great reliance to be placed on the report—that St. Ignatius, one of the early Fathers, and, as you probably recollect, one of the noble army of martyrs, was, when an infant, taken by our Blessed Lord in His arms, when he uttered those important words, “Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.” *

It could not be supposed that Satan would allow the holy religion of the Saviour of mankind to prevail in the world, without some endeavor to counteract its influence. He often stirred up the angry passions of cruel men against the

* St. Mark x. 14.

meek and quiet professors of the Gospel, and compelled both old and young to undergo torments, at the name of which one almost shudders; but this, as you know, did not effect what Satan desired. Instead of stopping the progress of the Gospel in the world, it caused it to spread wider and wider, until, as was observed by one of the Fathers, the Gospel of Christ had penetrated, by the end of the second century after Christ, into places which were inaccessible to the conquering arms of the Romans!

When, therefore, Satan found that he could not accomplish his vile object by persecution, he tried to weaken the cause of religion by corrupting its doctrines. St. John, in the Book of Revelation, which he wrote in the island of Patmos, about the year 96, alludes to some heretics who, at so early a period, had begun to disturb the peace of the Church, and to destroy that unity for which her Divine Founder earnestly prayed.* Indeed, the great object of St. John's Gospel was to defend the Christian faith against those

*Rev. ii. 14, 15; St. John xvii. 21.

who were seeking to corrupt it, asserting, in a clear and decisive manner, the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The heretics who thus early commenced their attacks on the Church, multiplied as time went on; but in most cases old heresies were revived in new forms. These were soon exposed and confuted by the Apostles; and the inquiries they provoked only served to assure the sincere inquirer, of the truth of the religion he had embraced, and to prove that it was founded on a rock which nothing could displace.

The most important heresy was that which took its name from Arius, a member of the Church at Alexandria, and is known by the term Arianism. It arose early in the fourth century, and soon spread over the neighboring provinces. Arius denied that our Blessed Lord was equal to the Father; he maintained that He was the first of created beings, although St. John says so plainly in the beginning of his Gospel, when speaking of Jesus Christ, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was

in the beginning with God.”*

But Arius taught otherwise, and drew many unstable people after him. His opinions with regard to the Holy Ghost were contrary to the received doctrines of the Church, although he did not express them so plainly as he did his notions concerning the Son of God. Alexander, who was at that time Bishop of Alexandria, expelled Arius from the Church, and he immediately retired to Palestine, where he busily employed himself in publishing his views. It is sad to think that many men of great piety and considerable learning, were drawn away from the truth by his plausible writings. He gratified their vanity, by teaching them to rely on their own understandings; and having cast aside those guides which would have kept them from error, they were ready to embrace any delusion which the great adversary of mankind might offer for their acceptance.

At first, the Emperor Constantine did not think the matter in dispute affected the fundamental doctrines of the Church,

*St. John i. 1, 2.

and he did not take much notice of it. But when he saw the danger which might arise from it; when he saw that it struck at the very root of our holy religion, by denying the Divinity of Jesus Christ, he immediately called together the Bishops throughout the world; and in the year 325 they assembled at Nice, in Bithynia, and formed the first General Council of the Church. The number of Bishops who assembled on that occasion, is said to have been 318; and Hosius, Bishop of Corduba, in Spain, presided. The Emperor Constantine came into the Council in his robes, but refused to sit on the throne which had been prepared for him. He ordered a Bible to be placed upon it, and took his seat among the Bishops.

In that assembly there was many a Confessor who bore on his face the marks of the sufferings which he had endured for Christ's sake. The Emperor made a speech, in which he declared that the determining of matters of Faith did not belong to him, but to the Bishops.

As the Council did not wish to act harshly, they allowed Arius to be pres-

ent, and permitted him to speak. He is said to have spoken much, and to have uttered many blasphemies, in all of which he was confuted by the Bishops who heard him. His errors were all condemned; and in order that they might not spread, the Council framed the Creed, which is called the Nicene Creed, receiving its name from the place where it was drawn up; and which is read in the Communion Service of our Church. Arius himself was sentenced to be banished.

In this Council, the Church, for the first time since the days of the Apostles, bore witness with united voice to the truth of those doctrines which had been taught by our Blessed Lord and His Apostles. Several other matters relative to the well-being of the Church were settled in this Council, after which the Bishops returned to their several Churches.

Although the writings and opinions of Arius were thus condemned, they continued to be maintained; and St. Athanasius, who succeeded Alexander as Bishop of Alexandria, was distinguished for his

powerful opposition to them. For a time, error was permitted to prevail against truth, but it was only for a time. The Emperor Constantine, having been persuaded by the friends of Arius that his condemnation and banishment were unjust, ordered him to be recalled; and on St. Athanasius refusing to restore him to his office in the Church at Alexandria, that Prelate was deposed by a small Council, held at Tyre, and banished into Gaul.

The Emperor was now disposed to show every favor to Arius, and accordingly invited him to Constantinople, where he is said to have died in a dreadful manner soon after his arrival. Some years afterwards, St. Athanasius was recalled from his banishment, and he returned to Alexandria, but being again attacked by his bitter enemies, the Arians, he was obliged to fly a second time; he was again recalled, and after a long life of suffering, was taken to his rest.

The unscriptural doctrine of Arius had at that time so generally prevailed, that St. Athanasius was said to have opposed the whole world. He, however, re-

mained faithful and true to the doctrines of the Church in which he had been brought up, and the Church, through his mouth, acknowledged God, and His Son, Jesus Christ. There is a Creed which has been used in various parts of the Church for many hundred years, called the Creed of St. Athanasius; but it was not written by him. It is uncertain who was the author of it; but it is said to have been composed by Hilary, Bishop of Arles, in Gaul, in the sixth century. At first it was called the Catholic Faith, but afterwards received its present name, in consequence of expressing very fully those doctrines concerning the Holy Trinity, which St. Athanasius maintained against the Arians.

In order to check the progress of Arianism in the Church, a General Council was called at Constantinople, which is called the second General Council. It began in the year 381, and was attended by 150 bishops. They confirmed the decrees which had been made at Nice fifty years before, and so strongly guarded the doctrine of the Holy Trinity against the


followers of Arius, that they were compelled to withdraw from the Church.

Arianism, being thus discountenanced, took refuge among the Barbarians, who were now invading the Roman empire, and has ever since been variously mixed up with the opinion of those sects which do not belong to the Church.

There were several other Fathers about whom I should like to speak: for instance, St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage; St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea; St. John, surnamed Chrysostom, on account of his wonderful eloquence, successively Bishop of Antioch and Constantinople; St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan; St. Augustin, Bishop of Hippo, in Africa; and St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers; but I must, on this occasion, content myself with the mention of their names.

Persecutions.

"Our Lord the path of suffering trod,
And since His sacred Blood hath flowed,
"Tis meet that man should yield to God
The life he owed."

 I HAVE already alluded to the sufferings and death of some of the early Christians, and you know that those holy men who form the Noble Army of Martyrs, laid down their lives in defence of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Innocence and virtue afforded no protection to those who, like their Lord and Master, were hated by the world.

But besides the occasional murder of Christ's servants, there were regular decrees made by some of the Emperors of Rome against the Christians, and these were called Persecutions. Of these, there were ten principal ones; and as they form an interesting feature in the early history of the Church, and afford an unquestionable proof of the influence

of religion in those times, I will give you some account of them.

Nero was the first Emperor who made decrees against the Christians; and from the cruelty of his character it is what one might expect. Although the Christians were simple and harmless in their lives, they offended their Pagan masters by ridiculing their superstitions, and endeavoring to gain converts to the religion of Christ. They were looked upon as the enemies of mankind, because their religion had a tendency to overthrow the idolatry which at that time universally prevailed. In short, they were thought to be Atheists, because they had no temples in which they worshipped, and no images before which they offered sacrifices. But besides being regarded as Atheists, and enemies of mankind, they were loaded with every kind of calumny which the wickedness of their opponents could invent, or which the credulity of the people would believe. Under these circumstances, they would easily be the victims of popular fury when it was excited against them.

In order that he might have the glory

of rebuilding Rome, Nero set fire to the city, and while it was burning, he is said to have ascended a tower, from whence he could see the flames, and there sung to his harp of the burning of Troy. This conduct brought him into great disgrace; and in order to escape the consequences, he charged the Christians with being the authors of the flames. There were few who really believed this accusation, but the Christians at that time were unpopular, and the decrees which the Emperor immediately published against them, were readily executed.

This was the first General Persecution, and nothing could exceed the horrors of it. At Rome, some Christians were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and were devoured by dogs. Others, as night drew on, were covered with inflammable materials, and set on fire; thus enabling the Emperor to enjoy from his garden the sight of their tortures. Many were put to death upon crosses, or in some other dreadful manner.

It was in this persecution, which began in the year 64, that St. Peter and

St. Paul suffered martyrdom; St. Peter being crucified with his head downwards; a death which he chose as being more dishonorable than that of his Divine Master. St. Paul was beheaded. The cruelties of this persecution were not confined to Rome, but are said to have prevailed throughout the Roman Empire, and lasted for five years, terminating with the death of Nero. It is impossible to say how many perished, but we may feel assured that several hundred who remained faithful unto death, are now rewarded with crowns of life.

During the next twenty-four or five years the Christians were free from persecution, but at length the cruelty of Domitian, which would occasionally vent itself on flies, was directed against them. This emperor, who was a monster of impiety and pride, used to call himself in his edicts by the sacred name of The Lord God, and he required those who approached his person to use the same address. A refusal to do this would probably bring the Christians under his displeasure; but this was not

the cause of the persecution which commenced in the year 93 or 94. It is said that it was occasioned by Domitian's fear of losing the Empire. He had been informed that a man would arise from among the relations of Jesus Christ, who being of an ambitious spirit, would excite commotion in the state, and aim at supreme dominion. Whether his fears were thus awakened it is impossible to say, but whatever was the cause he commenced a furious persecution, which was terminated by his death in little more than a year. While this persecution was raging Domitian sent for St. John the Evangelist to Rome, and caused him to be thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously delivered through the mercy of God. The oil which was intended for his destruction is said to have refreshed his aged limbs! The tyrant then banished St. John to the isle of Patmos, a place to which convicts were transported from Rome, where, as I dare say you recollect, he wrote the Book of Revelation.

The next persecution arose from a

quarter where it was little expected. The two first were carried on by tyrants, but the author of the third was a man distinguished for his gentleness. In the year 107, which was the ninth of his reign, Trajan was persuaded to look with suspicion on the Christians. He entertained an extreme veneration for the religion in which he had been brought up, and he thought he could not conciliate the favor of his Gods more effectually than by opposing Christianity. But in doing this he showed moderation. His directions were that the Christians were not officiously to be sought after, but that such as were accused and convicted of being Christians, were to be put to death as wicked citizens, if they did not return to the religion of their forefathers. Although this edict of the Emperor set some bounds to the fury of those who persecuted the Christians, and who would have been glad to have destroyed the very name of Christianity, yet it was the occasion of martyrdom to many. Whenever a person was accused of being a Christian, and confessed the truth of the charge, the alternative was

apostasy or death. A perseverance in the Christian faith was according to Trajan a capital crime. Through this the venerable and pious Simeon, son of Cleophas, and Bishop of Jerusalem, was crucified in consequence of an accusation brought against him by the Jews. Another martyr, whose name is held in grateful remembrance in the Church, won for himself a glorious crown in this persecution, I mean St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch. Having been questioned, and found to be a faithful servant of Christ, he was ordered by Trajan himself to be conveyed to Rome, and there exposed in the theatre to the rapacity of wild beasts. The law simply denounced death on those who persisted in their confession of Christianity, and the manner in which it was to be inflicted, rested with the judge. Hence it was that Trajan ordered this cruel death for St. Ignatius, after having exposed him to many torments. He was exasperated by the boldness of this servant of Christ, and determined, if possible, to strike terror into the hearts of others. In this persecution, St. Clement, Bishop of

Rome, was put to death by being thrown into the sea with an anchor about his neck. At length the persecution ceased, greatly to the annoyance of the persecutors; for Trajan, being assured of the harmless lives of Christians, would not allow any more cruelty to be exercised towards them. The peace, however, which they enjoyed during the remainder of his reign, terminated when Adrian succeeded to the throne.

The public games were about to be celebrated, when the population, urged on by the heathen priests, demanded the destruction of Christians. The magistrates became alarmed by their clamor, and fearing the consequences of a refusal, indulged them in their request. This was the fourth persecution, in which great numbers perished. It appears to have raged with greatest fury in Asia Minor, where however it was denounced by the Proconsul Granianus, as barbarous and unjust; upon which Adrian issued an edict prohibiting the putting of Christians to death, unless they were regularly accused and convicted of crimes committed against the laws.

Adrian was succeeded in the year 138 by Antoninus, surnamed the Pious, under whom the fifth persecution took place. As this prince was sincerely devoted to the worship of the heathen deities, the enemies of Christianity adopted their proceedings accordingly. Being checked by the last edict of Adrian from wanton persecution, they now charged the Christians with impiety and atheism. These were offences against the laws, and were allowed by this edict to be punished.

They were however defended by Justin Martyr, whose influence so far prevailed with the Emperor, as to check for a time the fury of the persecution ; but it again broke out in Asia, in consequence of some earthquakes, which the people foolishly attributed to the Christians. Many suffered in consequence of it ; but the Emperor being informed of these cruel proceedings, put an end to them by declaring that capital punishment should be inflicted upon all who should accuse Christians without being able to prove them guilty of the crimes with which they were charged.

Antoninus Pius was succeeded by

Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who admitted Lucius Verus as his associate and equal in the government. Although celebrated for his wisdom and virtue towards his other subjects, M. Aurelius Antoninus was remarkable for his intolerance and cruelty towards the Christians. Like his predecessor, he was devoted to heathen superstition, and therefore lent a ready ear to the calumnies which their enemies heaped upon the Christians. The cruelties and deaths which took place during this persecution which was the sixth, were equal to those which disgraced the reign of Nero. The Christians were put to the most cruel tortures, and were condemned to meet death in the most barbarous forms. Protestations of innocence were of no avail; and neither age nor sex had any effect upon the minds of men who were determined if possible to extirpate Christianity from the face of the earth.

I have hitherto for the most part spoken only generally of the punishments which were inflicted, and of those who suffered, but you will perhaps be interested if I give you a few particulars of

what actually occurred in this persecution.

About the seventh year of the reign of M. Aurelius Antoninus, a dreadful pestilence broke out, which was succeeded by famine and earthquakes, such as had never been known before. The productions of the earth through all Italy were devoured by locusts, and the surrounding barbarians taking advantage of these calamities, made incursions into the heart of the empire. As usual, these things were all attributed to the innocent Christians, and were the cause of a furious persecution. It commenced about the year 168, and the first victim whose name is known, was St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. This aged servant of Christ was seized by his oppressors, and every inducement was held out to persuade him to renounce his religion, but all to no purpose. He was then condemned to be burnt alive, but the fire refused to obey the barbarous order; for while St. Polycarp was at the stake, the flames rose up and formed an arch over the head of the victim, who remained uninjured by the surrounding heat. When

his enemies saw that the fire had no power over him, they commanded the executioner to kill him with a sword, which immediately released him from the power of the persecutors. Twelve other martyrs from Philadelphia suffered with St. Polycarp. A youth named Germanicus had a short time before drawn down upon himself the fury of the heathens, by his resolute profession of Christianity, and was devoured by wild beasts.

While the persecution was thus raging in Asia, it was destroying many victims at Rome. Here Justin Martyr, who a few years before had been successful in his endeavors to save his fellow Christians, was with six companions added to "the noble army of martyrs." But the persecution was felt with the greatest severity in France. I said that the persecutors did not regard age or sex; at Lyons a young girl named Blandina, after being exposed for some time to the most dreadful tortures, was at length tied to a cross, and thrown into a den of wild beasts. Pothinus, Bishop of Lyons, when ninety years of age, was scourged

and then stoned to death. These sufferings not being found sufficient to deter others from embracing Christianity, they had recourse to still greater barbarities. Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne in France, together with Maturus, was exposed in the amphitheatre, but this having no effect, they were imprisoned several days. Their constancy, however, remaining unshaken, they were placed on red hot iron chairs, from whence they were torn by the wild beasts ! Attalus, a Roman citizen, residing at that time at Lyons, was beheaded after having been fastened on a red hot iron chair. The name of Ponticus, a youth of fifteen, has been handed down to us, who after braving every kind of torture, won for himself a martyr's crown.

Such were some of the torments which were inflicted in this persecution. At length, however, it ceased, owing, it is said, to the victories which Aurelius gained in the German wars, by the aid of the Christian legion. For some time the Christians were unmolested, and during the reigns of Commodus, Pertinax, and Julian, were free from perse-

cution; but at length Severus, in the year 203, issued an edict, forbidding his subjects to change the religion of his ancestors, which proved very injurious to the Christians, especially in Asia and Africa, and caused the seventh persecution, in which many suffered martyrdom. Leonidas, the father of Origen, the distinguished writer in this century, fell under the fury of the oppressor; and two African ladies named Perpetua, and Felicitas, acquired an illustrious name by the courage with which they endured their sufferings.

From the death of Severus until the accession of Maximin, a period extending over 24 years, the Christians enjoyed a season of comparative calm; but this terminated when Maximin assumed the purple. Having urged his soldiers to assassinate his predecessor, Alexander, he dreaded the resentment of the Christians, who had been protected and favored by that excellent prince. He therefore commenced that persecution which is usually reckoned the eighth. His first victims were those Bishops whom Alexander had admitted to his

friendship. Besides these, Christians of every rank were exposed during the reign of this tyrant to the most barbarous deaths. The persecution however raged with the greatest fury in those places which were visited with earthquakes, the heathens as usual, attributing these visitations to the Christians.

This storm was succeeded by a calm which lasted till the year 249, when Decius ascended the throne. His accession raised a fresh tempest against the Christians, known by the name of the ninth persecution. This Emperor, either from an ill-grounded fear of the Christians, or from a zeal for heathen superstitions, published some terrible edicts, in which the Prætors were commanded either to extirpate the whole body of Christians, or force them by various torments to return to the Pagan worship. The Christians were every where driven from their houses, and not only plundered of all their property, but also exposed to the torments which could be inflicted by scourging and imprisonment, by fire and wild beasts, by scalding pitch and melted wax; and in short, by

every torment which the cruelty of man could invent. This persecution lasted two years; but the victims which fell in it were so numerous, that an ecclesiastical writer named Nicephorus, says that it would be easier to count the sands on the sea shore, than to reckon up all the martyrs who suffered in this persecution. Besides those who laid down their lives, great numbers betook themselves to voluntary exile, and gave rise to a class of Christians, of whom I will speak on another occasion.

After the death of Decius, the Christians suffered more or less under his successors, until the reign of Diocletian, when the tenth and last persecution broke out. The Pagan priests, perceiving that the religion of Jesus Christ was fast overthrowing their superstition, endeavored to persuade Diocletian to persecute the Christians. For some time he withstood their importunities, but at length, in the year 303, he was persuaded to issue an edict against them. Although rigorous and severe, this edict did not extend to the lives of those against whom it was issued. It deprived them

of their civil rights and privileges, but did not touch their persons. Not long after the publication of this edict, a fire broke out twice in the palace of Nicomedia, where Diocletian was lodged with Galerius. Their heathen enemies persuaded Diocletian that the Christians were the cause of this conflagration, and in consequence he caused great numbers to be cruelly tormented and put to death at Nicomedia.

Some tumults occurred about this time in Syria, and being attributed to the Christians, another edict was issued against them, in which all Bishops and ministers of the Christian Church, were ordered to be cast into prison. This edict was followed by a third, in which all sorts of torments were directed to be employed in order to force these venerable captives to renounce their profession by sacrificing to the heathen gods. In the second year of this horrible persecution, a fourth edict was published by Diocletian, in which the magistrates were ordered to force all Christians without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the Gods; and were author-


ized to employ every kind of torment to enforce obedience to their commands. The activity with which this inhuman edict was executed, nearly proved fatal to the Christian cause. But it now pleased Providence to remove the trials with which the Church had for so long a period been visited.

In the year 306, Constantine, surnamed afterwards the Great, succeeded to the western portion of the Roman empire, and from that time Christians under his dominion were unmolested. Those in the East, who were subject to Galerius, continued for some time to suffer occasionally from persecution; but at length the author of these having been brought to the brink of the grave by a lingering disease, published in the year 311, an edict, in which he commanded persecution to cease, and restored the suffering Christians to the freedom of which they had been deprived. After his death the enemies of the Christian faith still endeavored to oppress it, but the effects of their persecution were very limited. Soon afterwards the Emperor Constantine embraced the Christian religion,

and through his influence that faith was protected and disseminated, which for nearly 300 years had been an object of aversion to the great ones of the earth. In all these sufferings God was purifying His Church; trying it even as silver is tried, and preparing it for its future triumph, when throughout all the world it should acknowledge Him.

Divisions.

“One only way to life;
One Faith, delivered once for all,
One holy band, endowed with Heaven's high call;
One earnest, endless strife;
This is the Church th' Eternal fram'd of old.”

HE persecutions of which I have given you an account having failed in the object for which they were intended, which was to destroy Christianity, Satan endeavored to weaken its effects by promoting divisions in Christ's holy Church. It is sad to think that our Blessed Lord in His last prayer sought to promote unity among His followers, and that they should have paid so little attention to His wishes— Indeed, we can scarcely believe that those who first introduced discord into the Church, were real followers of Jesus Christ. We cannot now speak with anything like certainty about their object, but we cannot help fearing that they were more disposed to injure the cause of Christ, than to promote it

in the world. Several of these,—for instance, Hymeneus, Philetus, Phygellus, Hermogenes, Alexander, Demas, and some others are alluded to by St. Paul in his second Epistle to Timothy.* Their influence during the lives of the Apostles was very inconsiderable, but it acquired credit and strength by degrees, and imperceptibly laid the foundation of those sects whose animosities and disputes produced afterwards much trouble and perplexity in the Church.

It seems that an all-wise Providence appointed these things as trials of faith; for St. Paul said, “There must be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.”† It would be neither instructive nor entertaining if I were to enter into any particulars relative to these early sects. I shall therefore content myself with alluding to them, as showing at how very early a period the peace of the Church was disturbed.

In the second century a division arose in the bosom of the Church, with regard to the proper time for keeping Easter;

* 2 Tim. i., 15; ii., 17; iv., 10, 14.

† 1 Cor. xi., 19.

for from the days of the Apostles the Christians had yearly festivals, in commemoration of the birth, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles. Now, although they were agreed as to the festivals themselves they were not equally so with regard to the time of their observance; and more particularly so with regard to Easter. The day which was observed as the day on which our Lord died was called the Paschal day, or Passover, because it corresponded, in some measure, with the time at which the Jews celebrated their feast. The Christians of Asia Minor kept Easter on the 14th day of the first Jewish month, which always began at the new moon after the spring equinox, which occurs about the 21st of March. They said they had derived this custom from the Apostles St. John and St. Philip; and they also brought forward the example of Jesus Christ Himself, Who held His Paschal feast on that day, which was the time appointed by Moses for the Jewish Passover. An inconvenience arose from this arrangement, be-

cause, as the month did not always commence on the same day of the week, the 14th day did not always fall on Sunday; and in consequence of this the Eastern Christians sometimes celebrated our Lord's resurrection on a different day to that on which He actually arose from the dead. In pursuing this practice, they differed from their brethren in the West, who also alleged Apostolical authority for what they did, saying that they followed the practice of St. Peter and St. Paul, who observed Easter on the Sunday following the first full moon after the 21st of March.

For some time these different practices prevailed, without interrupting the brotherly affection which existed among the true members of the Church. At length, however, forbearance gave way to angry passions, and a violent dispute arose between the Asiatic and Western Christians. It occurred about the middle of the second century, in the reign of Antoninus Pius. In order to put an end to the dispute, and bring about a general reconciliation, the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp, came to

Rome to have an interview with Anicet, Bishop of that See. It was a long and dangerous journey for an old man to undertake, but a desire for all in the Church to be of one mind and one heart caused this faithful servant of God to disregard any danger to which he might be exposed. These holy men had many and anxious conferences on the subject in dispute; but as each thought his own views were correct, they unfortunately came to no agreement. They resolved, however, that the difference of opinion about Easter ought not to cause any ill feeling; and as a proof of this, Anicet requested St. Polycarp to consecrate the Eucharist during his visit to Rome.

Unhappily, these kind feelings died away with that generation; for towards the end of this century,—that is about the year 196,—Victor became Bishop of Rome, and being a man of proud and haughty temper, he endeavored to force the Asiatic Christians to conform to the Western Church, with respect to Easter. He did not beseech them as brothers, but he commanded them as if they had been his subjects.

This excited an angry feeling in the minds of men who considered that Victor had no authority over them; and they accordingly requested Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, to declare in their name that they would by no means depart from the custom handed down to them from their forefathers. This determined reply aroused the fury of the haughty Victor, who not only refused for the future to hold communion with the Eastern Christians, but pronounced them unworthy of the name of brothers, and excluded them from all fellowship with the Church of Rome. This excommunication, as it was called, was not of much consequence to those against whom it was directed, as it only extended to the Church of Rome, and did not cut off the Asiatic Christians from communion with the other Churches, whose Bishops were far from approving the conduct of Victor.

This unhappy state of things was put an end to by the wise and moderate remonstrances which St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, addressed to the Bishop of Rome; in which he pointed out the im-

prudence and injustice of the step he had taken, and showed how greatly he differed in conduct from Anicet, who, although he differed with the Christians in the East, treated them as brethren, and took leave of St. Polycarp in a most affectionate manner. In consequence of this and other remonstrances, Victor withdrew his excommunication, and they continued on friendly terms, although each retained their own customs until the Council of Nice, in the year 325, in which a decree was made abolishing the custom of the Asiatics, and ordering the time for the celebration of Easter to be the same throughout the world.

Although this unhappy dispute was finally settled, yet restless and discontented spirits continued to harass and distract the minds of men, and drew away the unstable and the weak. Sometimes too, a Bishop or Priest of the Church was led away by philosophy, falsely so called, and fell into deep and dangerous errors. These, however, were soon corrected, and the mischief did not extend very far beyond where it first appeared.

But in the early part of the fourth century that heresy arose to which I alluded in the "Fathers of the Church," and which for a time seemed to threaten the very existence of the Church. I mean the heresy of Arius. He, as you know, denied the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, saying that He was the first and noblest of those beings whom God the Father had created out of nothing; that He was the instrument by which God formed the universe, and therefore he was inferior to the Father both in nature and in dignity. This was a very dangerous heresy, because it took away from Christ His eternal power and God-Head. The Bishops of the Church throughout the world assembled, as I before told you, by command of Constantine the Great, at Nice, in Bithynia, when they condemned both Arias and his doctrines. But the error prevailed, in spite of all the exertion to stop it; and so widely had it spread at one time, that St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, whose memory is immortalized by the creed which bears his name, was said to have stood alone in defence of

the Catholic Faith. The divisions, however, were again healed, and the Church was once more in the enjoyment of peace.

In speaking of the divisions in the Church, it is scarcely necessary to allude to that remarkable impostor Mahomet, who appeared in the seventh century. He drew vast multitudes after him, and his followers are at the present moment very numerous in the East. His heresy was perhaps the boldest that has ever appeared; but as it offered a religion agreeable to the passions and appetites of mankind, it was received without much inquiry by those who were but too willing to believe it true.

The next event which disturbed the peace of the Church took place in the eleventh century. The Church had now spread far and wide, and for the better management of ecclesiastical affairs, the Roman empire had been divided into fourteen Church provinces, which were called Patriarchates, and the Bishop who was at the head of the province was called a Patriarch. The Patriarchs were all of equal authority in their respective

provinces, but those of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch had precedence of the others. This was decided in a council of Bishops. The Patriarchs were at the head of the Church in their respective provinces, and the Bishops were subject to their power alone. In the year 1073 Hildebrand was raised to the See of Rome, and was called Gregory the Seventh. For many years the Bishops of Rome, who were in fact Patriarchs, had been called Popes, a name which continues to the present time.

But although they were called Popes, and treated with the utmost reverence, they never assumed authority beyond the bounds of their Patriarchate, which was confined to Italy. Indeed, when the Patriarch of Constantinople was disposed to claim universal sovereignty over the Church, it gave great offence, and Gregory the First, or as he is generally called Gregory the Great, declared that such sovereignty was unlawful, and that whoever did assume it would be the Antichrist alluded to by St. John. It would have been a happy thing for the Church if Gregory the Seventh had followed the

example of Gregory the Great. Unfortunately, however, he was a man of great ambition, and he determined, if possible, to make the whole world subject to the See of St. Peter, as they called the See of Rome. Being totally devoid of principle he was indifferent as to what would be the result of his struggles for dominion, provided he could bring the whole world to his feet. He entirely changed the face of the Church in Italy, and usurped the power which had hitherto been vested in councils. His exactions, however, extended far beyond his own see ; and his insolence towards the King of France was carried to such an extent as to recommend a humble and obliging behaviour in that monarch, since both his kingdom and soul were under his dominion ! His energy enabled him to overcome every difficulty which beset him, and he at length succeeded in establishing for his successor in the See of Rome, an usurped power and dominion over all the Churches in the world.

A power which was thus won by extortion could not be expected to yield peaceable fruit. The Eastern Christians

had long been regarded by Rome as little better than schismatics, because they did not receive all the doctrines which were introduced at Rome. The decision of the Roman Church in matters of faith was held infallible, and therefore those who refused to submit to her authority were sure to incur the charge of schism. This was greatly increased in consequence of the claims of Gregory VII. and his successors, and at length, in the thirteenth century, there was a complete breach between Rome and the Christians in the East, which has continued until the present time. The Church of Rome retains her ancient name, and continues to excommunicate all who do not receive the doctrines she offers, or who refuse to acknowledge her supremacy over all other churches. The Eastern Christians are for the most part comprehended in the Greek Church. Thus divisions still prevail in the Church, and prevent the different branches from holding communion with each other.


I will say nothing about the different sects with which this country unhappily abounds. For although we have, as I

will show you on another occasion, a pure and Apostolical branch of Christ's holy Church, established in this country, pure in its doctrines as it was in its early days, and Apostolical in its constitution, having all those properties, or notes, as they are called, of a true Church, yet there are many who deny her authority, and refuse to accept the blessings which she offers. Thus does Satan continue to check and retard the advances of Christ's religion. There is an end of persecution, but it is to be feared divisions will never cease until that glorious time arrives which is spoken of in prophecy, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. *

* Rev. xl. 15.

Monasteries.

"In quietness of sacred love
They present seem with choirs above;
Their thoughts with God for evermore,
To know, to worship, and adore."

OR many years Monasteries rendered a valuable assistance to the Church; and as we at the present day are much indebted to those holy men who spent their lives in seclusion from the world, we must not pass by these institutions without some notice.

The early history of monasteries leads us back to that period, when numbers of men and women flying from the persecutions of which you have heard, betook themselves to deserts and caves, in order to escape the cruel torments to which they would otherwise have been exposed. In consequence of their solitary way of living they were called Hermits, and sometimes Anchorites; for both these names have a reference to a mode of life which seeks retirement from mankind.

The earliest name which is recorded of those who thus passed their lives, is that of Paul of Thebes in Egypt. He is usually called the Father of Hermits. It was not, however, altogether from a fear of torture that men withdrew from intercourse with their fellow-creatures. A notion arose in the third century that silence and solitude accompanied with such acts of mortification as would tend to exhaust the body, were the best means of instructing the soul in the knowledge of divine things. With a view, therefore, of acquiring this, many spent their lives in the strictest retirement. Although Paul was called the Father of Hermits, Antony was the means of bringing this kind of life into great repute. He lived in the fourth century, and commenced his solitary life by retiring to a place not far from his own home. He remained there for some time in order to accustom himself to his new mode of living, and also to obtain information and advice from those who had more experience than himself. He spent his life in labor and in prayer, and gained the affections of those whom

his celebrity attracted to his retirement, persuading many to choose a monastic life.

The system which was thus brought into great repute by Antony was at length changed from a solitary to a social system; and this was chiefly effected by St. Basil. Having been ordained a priest of the Church of Cæsarea, he ministered there, until the heresy of Arius induced him to withdraw from the troubles which he was unable to compose, and to retire into Pontus for the purpose of devoting himself to study and self-discipline. Here, however, he was far from being inactive, for he caused a number of monasteries to be founded, over one of which he himself presided. These monasteries in a short time became schools for that holy teaching which had been almost banished from the Church by the Arian heresy. At this early period a lasting benefit was conferred upon the Church by these self-denying men; and we who reap the advantage equally with those who then lived, have every reason to feel grateful for their exertion. When monastics as-

sociated together, and formed themselves into regular societies, they found it necessary to frame certain rules by which they might be governed, and by which disorder and confusion might be avoided. The earliest of these rules were formed by St. Basil, and were a practical commentary upon those passages of Scripture which relate to the duty which we owe to God, as well as that which is due to our fellow-creatures. In after times the simple rules of St. Basil were found insufficient for the government of societies which were composed of men who were actuated by motives of convenience, as well as of those who from true devotional feelings were desirous of retiring from the business and occupations of the world. Other rules were therefore drawn up, and adapted to the circumstances which called for them.

When the monastic system became fairly established in the world, it was divided into two principal orders, which were again subdivided. The principal orders were the Benedictines and Augustinians. The former derive their name from St. Benedict, a native of

Italy; and the latter from St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa. From the Benedictines arose the Clugniacs, Cistercians, Grandmontines, and Carthusians, all of which to a certain extent adopted the rules of St. Benedict, but generally with additional strictness. From the Augustinians proceeded the Præmonstratensians, Trinitarians, Dominicans, and Knights Hospitaler, who modified the rules of St. Augustine. Besides these there were the Knights Templar, Carmelites, Franciscans, and several others, which it is not necessary to mention, as my object is rather to give an account of the manner in which the Church was benefitted by the monastic system, than to enter upon a minute history of the system itself.

During the middle ages, monasteries were the only schools where religious and useful learning could be taught; and the literature of those times was in a great measure, if not entirely, contained within their walls. While arbitrary kings and rebellious barons were waging furious and vindictive wars with each other, the inhabitants of the cloister were

ously engaged either in the instruction of youth, or in copying with painful accuracy the writings which had come into their hands. In those days the art of printing was unknown, and the Holy Scriptures, as well as the works of ancient heathen authors and early Christian Fathers, were written with a pen on sheets of parchment, which are called manuscripts, from being written with the hand. Many of these are still in existence, and prove that men who lived in the dark ages, as the middle ages are generally termed, were quite as clever and ingenious as ourselves. The first letter in a chapter was sometimes highly ornamented, and this was called an illumination; and the designs of these were frequently of exquisite beauty. If many copies of the Holy Scriptures had not been made, we should now be as ignorant of God's will and our own duties as the poor heathen, who never heard of the true God. We have, however, every reason for believing that the Scriptures are quite perfect, because there is no allusion in any part of what now exists to matter which is not contained in it.

This is a service for which we are deeply indebted to the monastic system, which was evidently an instrument in the hands of Almighty God for the accomplishment of His own purposes. It is thoughtlessly supposed that monasteries were the abode of luxury and idleness ; but a short sketch of the rule of St. Benedict will show that this was not the case. The abbot under this rule was to preside over the monastery, and his monks were to consult and advise with him when any important affair was to be decided. He was to be obeyed without any hesitation. Secret faults were to be declared to him ; and if admonition and a public reprimand were ineffectual in producing amendment, excommunication was to follow ; and if this failed, corporal chastisement was to be inflicted. For light faults, what was called the lesser excommunication was to be pronounced, or they were to have solitary meals. For great faults, separation from table, from public prayer, and from society was enjoined ; and neither themselves nor their food was to receive a blessing ; and if any of the brethren spoke to them, ex-

cept those whom the abbot sent to persuade them to humility, and to make satisfaction, he was to receive the sentence of excommunication. Silence was to prevail throughout the monastery, and the head and eyes were to be inclined downwards. The inmates of the monastery were to rise two hours after midnight, for divine service. Lamps were always kept burning in their dormitories, and they were required to sleep clothed, with their girdles on.

The habits and goods of the house were to be in the hands of proper officers; and no private property was allowed. The silence which reigned throughout the monastery was unbroken during dinner, except by reading the Scriptures, which were read by a reader appointed for a week. There were to be two different dishes at dinner, together with fruit. One pound of bread was the daily allowance, and three quarters of a pint of wine. From September 14, which is Holy Rood day, to Lent, they dined at three o'clock ; during Lent, and till Easter, at six. From Easter till Whitsuntide, and during the summer, they dined at noon,

except on Wednesdays and Fridays, on which days they dined at three o'clock. The working hours were prescribed by the rule, and everything was regulated with the greatest exactness.

Enough has been stated to show that the life of a monk was not one of luxury and ease. Indeed, everything which has come within our view from those early times tends to prove that the monastics were men of great industry, and that they possessed highly intellectual and refined minds. In every part of Europe monastic establishments were founded, and many of them were endowed with great possessions. Kings and nobles seemed to vie with each other in acknowledging the value of these foundations, and in giving a substantial proof of their esteem by the liberality of their endowments.

There is another name intimately connected with the monasteries of Europe which I have not yet mentioned, and that is St. Bernard. No ecclesiastic ever attained greater influence than he did. His word was a law, and his counsels were regarded by kings and princes as

deserving the most respectful obedience. He lived in the twelfth century, at a time when the Benedictine rule was not observed with the strictness its founder intended. A reformed branch of this rule had been adopted with no great success at Citeaux, in France, from which the name of Cistercian is derived. But when St. Bernard visited this monastery with about thirty companions, for the purpose of enrolling themselves as monks of the Cistercian order, his name at once gave celebrity to it; and before the conclusion of the century, the order was in great repute throughout the whole of Europe. Indeed from the liberal and splendid donations with which they were enriched, they acquired the form and privileges of a spiritual republic, and exercised a kind of religious dominion over the other orders. From their connection with St Bernard, the Cistercians in France and Germany were often distinguished by the title of Bernardine monks.

The Cistercians were called white monks, from their dress, which was a white frock or cassock, over which they wore a black cloak when they went be-

yond the walls of the monastery. The Augustinians were called black monks, as they generally wore a black cassock with a white rochet over it, and over all a black cloak or hood. The Cistercian abbeys were generally built out of the way of the common haunts of men, in lonely mountain valleys, where they taught the barren wilderness to smile. St. Bernard himself was guided by his peculiar piety to make choice of such places. "Believe me," said he, to one of his friends, "you will find more lessons in the woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you what you cannot learn from masters. Have you forgotten how it is written, 'He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock?'"* You have need not so much of reading as of prayer; and thus may God open your hearts to understand His law and His commandments."

In the thirteenth century some fresh orders arose, which soon eclipsed in popular estimation the ancient monastic establishments. Two, however, far exceeded in reputation all the other sects into

* Deut. xxxii. 13.

which these irregular orders were divided, I mean the Dominicans and Franciscans, also known by the names of the Friar Preachers and Friar Minors. The former derived their name from Dominic, a Spaniard, a man of fiery and impetuous temper; the latter derived theirs from an Italian named Francis, the son of a merchant.

These orders were called into existence by Popes Innocent III. and Honorius III., and employed by them against the Waldenses, who were at that time opposing the corrupt doctrines and innovations of the Church of Rome. For this purpose they had institutions widely differing from the regular monastic orders. Instead of spending their time in retirement, they were to travel about, and warn the people against giving ear to those who attacked the Church of Rome. They were enjoined to live in poverty, and submit to its hardships; to work whenever they could find employment; and when they were unable to meet with it, they were permitted to beg. Hence they were called mendicants. They had recourse to every kind of expedient in


order to promote their advancement, and at length succeeded in surpassing the ancient orders. This, however, was in no small degree owing to the regular monks having considerably degenerated in point of learning from their predecessors. The strictness with which monastic bodies were treated by the first three Edwards, and the great increase of academic foundations in Oxford and Cambridge contributed to the decay of learning in the different monasteries. These institutions had been of great benefit to the Church at a time when nothing else could so well have supplied their place. But having accomplished the purpose for which they had been established, their days were now numbered, especially in England, and the Almighty, in His wisdom, allowed them to be the prey of a cruel and avaricious age.

Thus for many ages the Church found a sure refuge in the cloister; and although, as I shall show you on another occasion, she was much corrupted in many respects, was nevertheless faithful in the acknowledgment of God; and we should look with a lenient eye upon er-

rors from which we happily have been rescued, and remember that the institutions, as well as the manners, of the Middle Ages, were necessarily very different from our own.

Corruptions of the Middle Ages.

"O Lord and Christ, Thy Churches of the South,
So shudder when they see
The two-edged sword sharp issuing from Thy mouth
As to fall back from Thee;
And seek to charms of man, or saints above.
To aid them against Thee, Thou Fount of grace and
love!"

HE first three centuries after our Lord's Ascension, are usually considered to be so far pure, as to afford a standard of practice by which the opinions and conduct of Churchmen in succeeding ages may be fairly tried. At that early period men were for the most part of one heart and one mind; and the Church in which God was acknowledged was one throughout the world. In every country where Christianity was known, the Church taught the same articles of belief, for men had not yet learnt to set their own opinions above the written Word of God. They earnestly contended for the faith which was once delivered unto the

saints; * and if an Angel from heaven had preached any other Gospel unto them than that which the Apostles had preached, they would have held him accursed.† Happy would it have been for the world if these feelings had continued to prevail ! It was not however to be ; and we ought to feel thankful to God that for three centuries mankind were content to yield an implicit obedience to Holy Writ, and to be guided in their interpretation of it by Apostles and apostolic men. Indeed the doctrines of the Church were pure and Scriptural for a longer period than this, as we find from the decrees of the Fourth General Council, which was held at Chalcedon in the year 451, to condemn the opinions of Eutyches, who held some very strange notions with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The decrees of the first four General Councils are received by our branch of the Church, and are considered sound guides of faith and practice. So long as the Bishops met together in free councils, as they did in these early ages, the

* St. Jude 3.

† Gal. i. 8.

faith of the Church was sound. But as soon as the faith of the Christian world depended, not on a multitude of counselors, but upon one man, corruption made its appearance in the very vitals of the Church, and at length was the cause of blasphemous fables, bloody religious wars, and bitter persecutions.

It will not be necessary to notice every corruption of the true faith, which may be traced to the arbitrary decrees of the Church of Rome, but I shall mention some of the most striking of them, and you will at once perceive how contrary they are to the teaching of the Scriptures.

First, I will remark on the worship of the Virgin Mary, who although an honored instrument in the hands of God, and one whose memory is blessed, was notwithstanding only a mere human creature. From an early period the Virgin Mary was regarded with much reverence, but unhappily this reverence gradually increased to superstition.

At first, images of the Virgin were placed in churches, and at length worship was offered to her. This was a cor-

ruption of the 10th century, and received the sanction of the Pope. In order to raise her above mortals, an institution called the Rosary and Crown of the Virgin was established. This regulated the prayers which were to be offered. The Rosary consisted of fifteen repetitions of the Lord's Prayer, called *Pater Noster*, and one hundred and fifty Salutations to the Virgin, or *Ave Marias*. The proportion of prayer offered to God was rather small, compared with what the Virgin received. In the Crown they were more equal, consisting of six or seven *Pater Nosters*, and the same number of *Ave Marias*. All these prayers were counted by beads, which were strung together.

Our Blessed Lord gave no sanction for this when, hanging on the Cross, He saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved. He said to His mother, "Woman, behold thy son ! Then said He to the disciple, Behold thy mother !" * Here, a tender regard for His mother's safety was manifested, but no allusion to Divine honor.

In after times, and even now, in the

* St. John xix. 26, 27.

Roman Church, honor is paid to the Virgin, as great, if not greater, than to her Son ; and she is frequently invoked to use her mediatorial power, in order to procure those blessings which the Saviour is ready to bestow upon all who pray to Him for them.

There was another corruption of the doctrine of our blessed Lord being the only Mediator between God and man, and that was with regard to the worship of saints. The memory of God's faithful servants was always fondly cherished in the Church, and deservedly so, for the holy Psalmist declared that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." * But in the eighth century this pious reverence was changed into a superstitious veneration for Saints, and Relics connected with them ; and those who were desirous of obtaining salvation were exhorted to place their confidence in the works and merits of the saints ! Here, again, unhappily, the pure Word of God was forsaken, and men were, in consequence, led away by their own delusions. In the following century, this

* Ps. cxii. 6.

idolatrous devotion was considered as the most sacred and important branch of religion ; and very few ventured to hope that they would be able to obtain mercy from God, unless they had secured the protection and intercession of some saint. Hence it was that every family had its own patron among the saints, who was called the tutelar saint of those who placed themselves and their spiritual affairs under his or her protection. The opinion that it was the safest to engross, if possible, the whole service of the tutelar saint, rendered it necessary to increase the number of saints, in order to create new patrons for the deluded people ; and this was done with much zeal. The imagination was soon employed, which invented the names and histories of saints which never existed, and furnished the multitude with objects of devotion. All this took place within the bosom of the Church, without one warning voice being raised to call back the votaries of superstition to the old and true path from which they had so widely wandered.

This reverence for departed saints,

which induced men to confide in their intercessions and succour at the Throne of Grace, and to invest them with an imaginary power of healing diseases, working miracles, and delivering from all sorts of calamities and dangers, led them to believe that their bones, their clothes, the apparel and furniture which they had possessed during their lives, and even the very ground which they had touched or in which their putrefying bodies were laid, retained a wonderful virtue of healing disorders, both of body and mind, and of defending such as possessed them against the assaults and devices of Satan. This gave rise to an extensive traffic in these sacred articles ; and the greatest impositions were practised on many who were bent on possessing a wonder working relic.

The superstitious reverence which was paid to Saints and Relics, led, in the tenth century, to another corruption of the Faith once delivered to the Saints ; I mean, the doctrine of Purgatory. Purgatory is a place in which it was supposed that souls would be purged by fire from all impurities which they had con-

tracted in the flesh, before they could be received into heaven. The fears of the torments of this place, were carried to their greatest height in this century ; and, as these pains could be relieved, and the soul delivered from its torments by means of money, this doctrine became the source of an enormous revenue to the Church. It mattered not how a wealthy sinner lived, nor what crimes he had committed, provided he left sufficient money to procure a certain number of masses to be said for the benefit of his soul in Purgatory ! It is wonderful in what errors mankind involve themselves when once they forsake the guidance of those Scriptures which alone can make us wise unto salvation !

It was pretended that the saints—those blessed ones of whom the world was not worthy, had done more than was necessary for their salvation, and that the works thus performed were ready to be applied to those who were deficient. It was, in a great measure, from this source that souls in Purgatory were said to derive relief. It is scarcely possible to imagine a doctrine which can give greater

comfort to the rich, or one which can be rendered more profitable, in a pecuniary point of view. It prevailed throughout the Western Church, and for a time the Eastern Church received it, and it still is held in the Church of Rome. It was one of the first errors discarded by the Church of England at the time of the Reformation. Its authority as a doctrine, rested on a decree of a Council held at Florence, and the decrees of this Council had no weight with the Reformers in determining what doctrines were true, and what were corrupt; because it was not held until about the year 1439; and the doctrine, being so plainly opposed to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, was at once rejected.

Most of our ancient churches bear witness how widely this doctrine had spread, and how deeply it had taken root in this kingdom before the Reformation. In almost every church there are the remains of what is called a chantry, or a little chapel, which was endowed for the maintenance of a priest to sing masses, for the purpose of redeeming the soul of the founder from the pains of purgatory.

The benefit was not always restricted to him who furnished the endowment, but was often extended to various branches of his family.

The last corruption to which I shall allude is one which is still fondly clung to in the Roman Church, and is known by the name of Transubstantiation.

Transubstantiation means the change of the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper into the actual Body and Blood of our Blessed Lord ; and this the Romanists maintain is effected by the consecration of the Priest. The Primitive Church held, and the Church of England at the present day holds, the doctrine of Christ's Real Presence in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. The manner in which He is present was always a deep and awful mystery, and was never attempted to be defined until the Church of Rome boldly undertook to determine it, by asserting that, after consecration, the bread and wine change their substance, although they do not alter their form, and become the Body and Blood of Christ. In thus destroying the mystery, the Church of Rome claims

the performance of a standing miracle, and unhappily in so doing, brings her members into the peril of idolatry.

When our Saviour instituted this Holy Sacrament, "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is My Body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins."* In this our Lord did not define the way in which the bread and wine were His Body and Blood; He merely stated that they were, and as such we should believe them to be, without endeavouring to be wise beyond what the Scriptures tell us. In such a light the Church viewed it until the eighth century, when human reason, ever impatient of control, overstepped her bounds, and prepared the way for a complete development of this new doctrine in the following century by Paschasius Radbert, Abbot of Corby. He was strongly and ably opposed by Raban Maurus, Archbishop of Mentz, who spoke

* S. Matthew, xxvi. 26—28.


of this doctrine as an error broached by some individuals “unsoundly thinking of late,” and condemned it as an unscriptural innovation. Bertram or Ratram, a monk of Corby, very ably refuted Paschasius Radbert, and maintained the scriptural view of this doctrine in accordance with the teaching of the early Church.

There were many other corruptions which were from time to time introduced in that Holy religion which our Blessed Lord commanded his Apostles to teach, and which completely concealed the pure and simple doctrines of the first ages of Christianity. The writings of the Fathers have always been valuable as commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, and in many cases as interpreters of points which are somewhat obscure and difficult to understand; but in the centuries which preceded the Reformation, they were allowed to supersede the Holy Scriptures, and to throw them, as it were into the shade. But when the Holy Scriptures once more regained that hold on the affections of mankind which for many years they had unhappily lost, and were again regarded as the only certain standard by

which the truth of a doctrine could be established, the mind of many a sincere inquirer after truth was startled by the novelties which were offered to him as articles of faith; and when these were found to be the commandments of men, and not the doctrines of the Holy Spirit of God, they prepared the way for that mighty convulsion which shook the Church to the centre in the sixteenth century, and which is commonly known by the name of the Reformation.

The Reformation.

“He will aid the work begun,
For the love of His dear Son;
He will breathe in their true breath,
Who serene in prayer and faith,
Would our dying embers fan,
Bright as when their glow began.”

HESE unscriptural doctrines to which I have alluded, and which polluted the pure stream of truth as it flowed from the lips of the Apostles, were first exposed in the fourteenth century by an Englishman who bore the honored name of John Wycliffe; and as my history will now be that of the Church of England, I shall confine myself to an account of the English Reformation.

The corruptions to which I have alluded had now reached their height, and their unsoundness was ably shown by him who was called the “morning star of the Reformation.” The bold teaching of Wycliffe soon gained him many followers, and their uncompromising hostility to

the prevailing corruptions procured for them attentive hearers wherever they addressed the people. Their favorite places for preaching were on market crosses or in stone pulpits which were then standing in populous places. The followers of Wycliffe called themselves poor priests; and by walking barefoot and avoiding everything like personal display, they seemed to imitate the poverty and simplicity of the first teachers of our holy religion.

We cannot be surprised that an outcry was raised against them by those who were interested in maintaining the corruptions which they were endeavouring to remove. Nor is it unlikely that in such a movement as this, many would engage with very unworthy motives, whose object was not so much to promote the true worship of God, as to serve their own political ends. But in Wycliffe himself there was great sincerity and singleness of mind, and he was a valuable instrument in the hands of Providence for awakening men's minds to a knowledge of scriptural truth, and to the deadly errors which they had unhappily embraced.

The rise of these errors may be traced to the usurped dominion which the Bishop of Rome, or the Pope, as he is commonly called, acquired over all the other Churches of Western Christendom. It was no longer necessary to call a general council to deliberate on and to establish by its decree any point of doctrine, as the Pope's own authority was sufficient for the purpose. This being the case, the first object of Wycliffe was to shake off the usurped dominion of Rome, and to restore each Church to the independence which it originally enjoyed. This, however, he did not live to see accomplished. He prepared the way for it, but the completion was reserved for the sixteenth century. There was one work which Wycliffe was permitted to finish, and that was the translation of the Bible into English.

Before his time the English people had no entire version of the Holy Scriptures in their own language. The Anglo-Saxons had indeed translated a great portion of it, but as the art of printing had not then been discovered, this translation was of no use to the people in general.

The expense of copying the Bible with a pen confined the use of it, in a great measure to the rich. Wycliffe's translation was not made from the original Hebrew and Greek, but from the Latin, and was completed in the year 1380; and the price of it in the year 1429 was £2. 16s. 8d., which in our money would be ten or twelve times as much. This was a great price, but we must remember the art of printing had not then been discovered. Notwithstanding this high price, it was in very great request, and copies were accordingly speedily multiplied.

This translation was not immediately denounced, owing to the influence of John of Gaunt; but in the year 1408 it was condemned by convocation, and ten years afterwards by Act of Parliament. Those who objected to this translation did not think it wrong for the people to read the Bible, but they were opposed to unauthorised persons publishing their own versions of it.

In making an English version of the Bible, Wycliffe was far from sending every private man to the Bible, to make

out a creed for himself; he was only careful to warn his hearers against receiving new articles of belief, on the authority of the Pope; his own rule of faith being the same as that of Vincent of Lerins, and other Fathers of the primitive Church, viz.: That alone is true which has ever been believed by all people in all places.

Wycliffe was much opposed to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, to which I have alluded in noticing the various corruptions of our holy religion. This doctrine had never been formally received by the Church of England, although it was very generally held. Wycliffe however, boldly denied that it was a primitive doctrine, and in so doing brought down upon himself the condemnation of his views by the University of Oxford, which pronounced sentence of imprisonment and suspension from office in the University, and excommunication. This was a severe sentence, and shows very plainly the spirit with which the controversy was carried on.

Wycliffe was sitting in his doctor's chair, and explaining his views on this

controverted point, when he was informed of the decree which had been passed. When he recovered from his first surprise, he said that neither the Chancellor, nor those who acted with him could refute what he taught; and since this decree would suspend him from performing his duties in the University, he would appeal to the King in Parliament, Richard the Second being at that time on the throne. This proceeding was looked upon as a further proof of Wycliffe's heresy; but before any steps could be taken, a fearful outbreak of the peasantry occurred, which threatened for a time to overthrow the established order of society. The Archbishop of Canterbury was murdered by a mob, and Wycliffe for a time retired to Lutterworth, of which he was rector. When domestic peace was restored Wycliffe pursued his appeal; but as he introduced other matters besides his dispute at Oxford, his appeal was unsuccessful.

The name of the Archbishop who was murdered was Sudbury, and he was succeeded by Courtney, a man who was

violently opposed to Wycliffe's views; and in order to suppress them, he summoned a synod at the house of the Black Friars in London, and procured their condemnation. Hitherto the doctrine of Transubstantiation had rested on the decree of the Pope, but by this synod it was solemnly declared to be a true doctrine, and that to deny it was heresy. The Duke of Lancaster had been a great supporter of Wycliffe against his enemies, but the unsettled state of men's minds compelled the Duke to decline any further interference in his favor; and the Reformer again withdrew to his retirement at Lutterworth, where while assisting at the Celebration of the Holy Communion, on Innocents' Day, A. D., 1384, he was seized with a fit of palsy, and continued speechless from that moment until his death, which took place on the last day of the same year.

This was the merciful end of him who first dared to lift up his voice against the corruptions which were destroying the faith once delivered to the saints. I say it was a merciful end, for if he

had lived he would in all probability have been brought to trial for his bold opinions, and perhaps have been put to a cruel death.

The opinions of Wycliffe were not altogether free from error. But his opponents evidently perverted much of what he taught, and made it appear that he held views which were contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Although he had many followers, there was no one, when he died, capable of succeeding him as a leader in a mighty movement. Some of those who held his opinions again relapsed into the errors they had warmly denounced, and persecution in the succeeding reign silenced others.

The reformers were generally known at this time by the name of Lollards—a word which is of very doubtful derivation. But persecution, although it silenced the lips, did not check the progress of the opinions which it endeavored to exterminate. The Lollards were not allowed to worship in the churches, but they held their meetings in secret; and as the State had declared against them, they added political discontent to their

religious opinions. They had several friends in the House of Commons, who, twice during the reign of Henry IV., presented petitions to the king, praying him to seize upon all Church property. But the Archbishop of Canterbury, kneeling before the king, reminded him of his coronation oath, in which he had promised to maintain the Church and her ministers in all their rights and privileges. He spoke of the little profit which had arisen to the crown from the seizure of alien priories and cells by Edward III., and represented, in language almost prophetic, the certain impoverishment of a kingdom which should resort to such means of plunder and spoliation. He had interest with the temporal lords, some of whom he had saved from forfeiture by pleading their cause with the king, and they joined him in his intercession. The king appeared to be moved, and said, "Whatever else I do, I will leave the Church in as good a state, or better, than I found it. He was as good as his word, and never listened to these proposals afterwards.*

* The English Reformation, by Massingberd, p. 178.

It would have been well if the Archbishop of Canterbury had satisfied himself with defending the Church against those who were anxious for plunder; but, attributing these attacks to the principles which Wycliffe had formerly maintained, he endeavored to procure an order from the Pope to take up the body of Wycliffe, which had been buried nearly forty-four years, and to burn his bones. This was refused; but in a few years afterwards—i. e., in the year 1415—the Council of Constance made a decree for this purpose, which was executed by the Bishop of Lincoln; and the ashes of Wycliffe were thrown into a stream which flows by Lutterworth.

Many illiterate men who had embraced Wycliffe's views, but who had sadly distorted the teachings of the Reformers, rendered themselves obnoxious by the pertinacity with which they maintained their opinions, and suffered from the laws which were rigorously enforced against them. But the greatest offense was caused by certain knights and gentlemen continuing to maintain the preachers of Wycliffe's doctrines, and

sending them about the country. Among these Sir John Oldecastle, a knight of Herefordshire, was very conspicuous. He had married the heiress of Lord Cobham, and was summoned to Parliament as Lord Cobham, in right of his wife's barony. He was a man of considerable influence, and had earned a good reputation by his military services; but he was a warm supporter of the opinions which were now forbidden. It was in vain that fresh decrees were passed to restrain the propagation of views which were declared to be heretical; Cobham set them all at defiance, as indeed he did the summons of the Archbishop to appear before him.

Finding, however, that sentence of excommunication was passed upon him in his absence, he was induced to go the King, and deliver to him a confession of his faith. Henry V., who had a great regard for Cobham, seeing his friend was bent on opposing the laws and religion of his country, was equally determined to prevent him, and therefore sent him a prisoner to the Tower, from whence he was brought before the Archbishop of

Canterbury, and the Bishops of London and Winchester, at the Chapter House of St. Paul's. Here he gave a confession of his faith, which being deemed unsatisfactory, they adjourned the court for two days, at which time he again failed to satisfy his judges, who proceeded to pass their final sentence, by which they declared Sir John Oldecastle, Lord of Cobham, to be a convicted heretic; and as such they delivered him to the secular jurisdiction. He was sent back to the Tower, from whence, by some means or other he contrived to escape, and shortly afterwards was reported to have conspired with twenty thousand of his party to seize the King and overthrow the government. This, however, never took place, as the King, by his timely measures, anticipated the conspirators, and caused six-and-thirty to be executed. The reward of a thousand marks was offered for the apprehension of Cobham; and at length he was taken in Wales, after a very desperate resistance. He was conveyed to London, where he was sentenced to be hanged and burnt as a convicted heretic and traitor; and

this horrible sentence was carried into effect in every particular. Being at this time a prisoner in the Tower, he was drawn from thence on a hurdle through the streets of London to a low gallows erected in St. Giles' Field, on which his body was fastened horizontally in chains, and lighted faggots being placed beneath, he was burnt to death.

We cannot help shuddering at the cruelties which were practiced in those days; but we must never forget that those who lived in the days we are describing did not enjoy the advantages which we possess; and therefore, instead of passing a hasty opinion upon them for what they did, we should remember, that as we know so much better than they did what we must do to please God, so He will require more at our hands.

It is not very certain what Cobham and his friends were meditating to do, but it was believed at that time that he was strongly opposed to the government of Henry V. Several insurrections had taken place about this time, and a little before, so that men's minds appeared to

be very unsettled; and this would seem to justify the judges of Cobham in passing such a sentence as would produce terror in other restless minds.

The Lollard party continued to exist after the death of their leader, but they were by no means in a prosperous condition. Being deeply implicated with political schemes, they had lost their former credit, and were become a despised and persecuted sect.

Ever since the days of Wycliffe there had been two parties in the Church, each being sincerely desirous of reforming abuses and corruptions; but they were by no means agreed as to the manner in which this should be effected. The Lollards, as we have seen, were zealous and enthusiastic, but they were not guided by prudence. The other party proceeded more carefully and judiciously; and we have the fruits of the wisdom of two distinguished bishops of this party, in the foundations of New College and Magdalen College in Oxford, and St. Mary's College at Winchester. The example of these prelates was afterwards followed by Henry VI., when he fulfilled

his father's intention as to the disposal of the alien priories, which were now suppressed, by the foundation of King's College, at Cambridge, and Eton.


"Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade."

The civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster so occupied the minds of men during the latter part of the fifteenth century, that they had scarcely leisure to attend to religious disputes; but what was called the *New Learning* was gradually gaining ground; and at length, when peace was restored by the accession of Henry VII. to the throne, in the year 1485, it was found that the religious principles of the Reforming party were deeply rooted in the minds of the great body of the people.

The Reformation.

(CONTINUED.)

"Yet along the Church's sky,
Stars are scattered, pure and high;
Yet her wasted gardens bear
Autumn violets, sweet and rare—
Relics of a spring-time clear,
Earnests of a bright New Year."

LTHOUGH I proposed to limit my account of the Reformation to what took place in England, we must not pass over in silence the name of Martin Luther, who acted so conspicuous a part in the General Reformation. He was born in the year 1483, and became a Professor in the University of Wittemburg, in Saxony. His writings produced a very great excitement in Germany, which quickly communicated itself to England.

The followers of Wyckliffe had continued to read such portions of the Scriptures as they possessed, notwithstanding the danger to which it exposed them. So precious was the Holy Book, that

they went out into the woods and fields, and other retired places, to read that blessed volume, which in the English tongue was banished from their churches. One man was accused to his Bishop of reading the English Bible in the fields; another was said to have been seen in the woods, looking on a book; and it was reported of a third, that he had said he trusted to see the day when maids should sing the Scriptures at their wheels, and ploughmen at their plough.* This was in 1519. The art of printing had now been established in the country nearly fifty years, and this wish had, therefore, every prospect of being realized.

Erasmus, a native of Rotterdam, in Holland, at this time resided much in England, and his genius and writings had great influence among English students. The Holy Scriptures began to be studied in the original tongues, and more attention was now paid to them in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, than to the writers who are commonly known by the name of the School-

* English Reformation, p. 238.

men, and who principally flourished in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But notwithstanding this, the Lollards were by no means a popular party. Many who were in favor of a Reformation in religion were far from adopting the principles which were held by many of the followers of Wycliffe. In the year 1526, a translation of the New Testament, made from the original Greek, was first printed and published by William Tindal: a circumstance which greatly promoted the Reformation. It was sold for the low price of 3s. 6d., which enabled every one to possess a copy; whereas Wycliffe's translation which had been made rather more than a hundred years before, sold for £2. 16s. 6d. Many attempts were made to suppress this translation, but in vain. Copies were purchased to be burnt, but the money paid for them enabled many other copies to be published: and this was the state of things when the struggle commenced between Henry VIII. and the Pope, which ended in the Reformation being accomplished.

The accession of Henry VII. to the

throne, put an end to those unhappy wars which for so many years had thrown a gloom over England; and in the year 1509, he was succeeded by his son, Henry VIII. He ascended the throne under very favourable circumstances; but he soon gave indications of an arbitrary and overbearing temper. It not unfrequently happens that under such circumstances as these, the hand of God is most clearly manifested in accomplishing His own work; and thus He makes the wrath of man minister to His own glory.

The success of Henry's early days, was in a great measure owing to the wisdom and sagacity of Cardinal Wolsey, who was for many years his chief minister and adviser. Wolsey, who was born of humble parents, received his education at Magdalen College, Oxford, and having obtained the favor of Henry VII. was promoted to the Deanery of Lincoln; and it was in that office that he first became known to Henry VIII. His advancement was then very rapid, for in one year he was made Bishop of Tournay, in France, Bishop of Lincoln,

and Archbishop of York! Soon afterwards, he exchanged Lincoln for Durham, retaining Tournay and York. He was afterwards translated to Winchester, holding at the same time some other valuable preferment; and after being made a Cardinal by the Pope, was made Lord Chancellor by the King.

There is no other instance recorded of any other subject being loaded with the same extent and amount of preferment as Wolsey was. He assumed almost royal state, and had lords and gentlemen in his train. Wolsey was too great a statesman to be insensible to the condition of the Church, and too confident in his own powers to be deterred from attempting a remedy. His foundation at Oxford, of which Christ Church is but a portion, would have been the most splendid in Europe; but while he was proceeding to remedy abuses with a vigorous hand, the fatal turn arrived in his affairs, which was ruinous to himself, and to that overgrown fabric of Church power, of which he at once exemplified the splendor and abuse.*

* English Reformation, p. 247.

For twelve years Henry VIII. had been engaged in opposing the doctrines of Luther, for which he received from the Pope the title of Defender of the Faith, when a serious dispute arose between him and the Bishop of Rome, with regard to the legality of his marriage with Catherine of Arragon, the widow of his elder brother, Arthur, Prince of Wales. Pope Julius II. had granted a dispensation for this marriage, although it was protested against by Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was, accordingly, solemnized. After being married eighteen years, Henry had only one child living, and that was the Princess Mary.

Whatever might have been the scruples of the King with regard to his marriage, it is certain that his affection for Anne Boleyn, the daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, made him still more desirous to set his former marriage aside. This, however, could not be done without the sanction of the Pope; and as the reigning Pope refused to revoke the dispensation made by his predecessor, the King manifested a great

inclination to reject his authority altogether. His first indignation was directed against Wolsey, who had committed a serious offense by acting as Legate to the Pope, but on his submission the King granted him full pardon; but shortly afterward ordered him to repair to York, where he was arrested on a charge of high treason, and died at the Abbey of Leicester on his way to London to undergo a trial.

Some time before Wolsey's death Cranmer attracted the notice of the King by expressing an opinion that he should collect the judgments of the principal universities and divines of Europe with regard to his marriage, and that if they should decide in the King's favor, his own clergy might settle the question. Cranmer wrote in favor of a divorce, and six foreign universities, besides those of Oxford and Cambridge, having decided in the King's favor, their opinions were laid before Parliament. The King showed his determination to assert his independence of the See of Rome in other matters, and exacted large sums of money from the clergy as a compromise

for having admitted the authority of the Pope.

The principles of the Reformation were now beginning to be preached by men of good education and deep learning. Among these the names of Ridley and Latimer stand conspicuous. from the part they took in accomplishing that ecclesiastical revolution which was now at hand.

The only step which had hitherto been taken was the liberation of the Church of England from subjection to the see of Rome. The Scriptures were now accessible to all ranks of men, but the doctrines of the Church remained the same as they had been during the preceding century.

The promotion, however, of Cranmer to the see of Canterbury opened the way to great and important changes. In the year 1534 the English Parliament passed a series of laws, by which the papal authority was renounced, and the submission of the clergy to the King was confirmed. A commission was given to thirty-two persons, half clergy and half laymen, to compile a new body of eccle-

siastical laws, and to revise and alter the old canons in order to adapt them to the present condition of the Church. Many who were willing to receive the reformed doctrines were unwilling to acknowledge that the marriage of Catherine was void from the beginning, and on their refusal to take an oath to maintain the succession of the King's children by Anne Boleyn, were committed to the Tower as traitors. There was also another oath enforced which caused the deaths of many, and that was an acknowledgement that the King was supreme head of the Church. This being understood to relate to spirituals was refused by great numbers, and led to the execution of Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, together with some monastics. Thomas Cromwell was at this time the unscrupulous agent of King Henry, and was appointed by him vicar-general in ecclesiastical affairs; and by the authority with which he was thus invested, he appointed a commission to inquire into the state of monasteries. The commissioners presented their report to Parliament in the year 1536.

An act was then passed giving to the King all those monasteries whose incomes were under £200 per annum, and their number being about 380, yielded an income of about £30,000, besides jewels and plate, which were valued at £100,000. There is no doubt that there was a great falling off among the inhabitants of monasteries from their ancient purity and devotion to God's service; but the charges which were brought against them were greatly exaggerated in order to give countenance to the spoliation which was resolved upon. Had they been true they would not have justified sacrilegious hands in seizing, and converting to their own use, property and treasures which had been solemnly dedicated to God. If abuses were proved, they ought to have been corrected, and monastics ought to have been compelled to observe the rules of their founders, which were most carefully framed. But Cromwell proceeded in an arbitrary and tyrannical manner; he executed his office entirely to Henry's satisfaction, and received a considerable share of the plunder, as a reward of his

exertions. The people, however, soon found that the destruction of monasteries and the alienation of their lands would be hurtful to themselves, and this produced some serious tumults, which were suppressed without coming to a regular engagement, and some of the leaders were executed for high treason. In the year 1538 Henry seized upon the treasure in Becket's shrine of Canterbury, ordered the bones of the saint to be burnt, and scattered to the winds, and caused his name to be erased from the calendar!

The following year completed the work of plunder by the spoliation of the greater monasteries. Great cruelties were practiced in their suppression; and abbeys which had for centuries opened their hospitable gates to the needy and distressed, were ruthlessly seized upon by the King and his courtiers. It is said that Archbishop Cranmer was strongly opposed to this spoliation, but was overruled by the despotic monarch. It is said that the influence of the Reformers declined at court after the destruction of the monasteries, and

this is attributed to the attempt which was made to save these time-honored institutions. The exertions, however, which Cranmer and Ridley made were not altogether without success. Several colleges were founded in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and grammar schools in different parts of the country, by the munificence of individuals. Hospitals, too, were founded and endowed.

It was left to the piety of Edward VI. to complete some of the works which remained undone at the death of his father, and the foundations of Christ's Hospital, and the schools at Shrewsbury and Birmingham are among the memorials of the youthful monarch's zeal. It was during the progress of the destruction of the monasteries that Anne Boleyn fell a victim to Henry's caprice. She urged Latimer to intercede for the preservation of them, but the influence of Gardiner, who was afterwards distinguished for his cruelty, prevailed against him.

At this time the Church of England was completely delivered from the usurped dominion of the Pope, and the

monarch was declared to be supreme over all persons, and in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil. It was by the authority which he thus possessed that the King put forth, with the sanction of Parliament, in the year 1539, six articles of faith, under the severest penalties. These were in strict accordance with the teaching of the Church of Rome, and were opposed by those who were favorable to the Reformation. The King's party again prevailed, and Latimer, who was now Bishop of Worcester, and Shaxton, Bishop of Salisbury, were deprived of their bishoprics for their opposition to the "Six Articles," and were thrown into prison; and in a short time more than five hundred persons were deprived of their liberty from the same cause.

In the following year Cromwell who had been an unscrupulous instrument of his royal master, incurred his displeasure and without the benefit of a trial suffered as a traitor. His death was followed by the execution of many better men; and it is said that more people were put to death for their religion during the latter

part of the reign of Henry VIII. than suffered in that of his daughter Mary. The Roman Catholic who denied the King's supremacy, and the Reformer who denied the doctrine of transubstantiation were equally the victims of the King's arbitrary power.

In the year 1543, the King was married to Catherine Parr, his sixth and last wife. She was a woman of considerable learning and great piety, and it was through her instrumentality that the Commentary of Erasmus on the New Testament was translated into English; and she persuaded the King to have it placed in churches, together with the Bible. The publicity which was thus given to the Holy Scriptures was, under God's Providence, the great means of hastening the completion of the Reformation.

Bishop Latimer lay for some years a prisoner in the Tower, but was liberated towards the end of Henry's reign. His fellow prisoner, Bishop Shaxton, was not so fortunate. He had spoken some words during his imprisonment against Transubstantiation, and he only saved his life

by a very painful and humiliating recantation.

The Queen and Cranmer, being known to be favorers of the Reformation, an attempt was made to undermine their credit with the King, and to bring them within reach of the bloody laws which were in force. But they were mercifully protected ; and at length delivered from all danger by the death of the King, which took place on the 27th of January, 1547.

With regard to the Reformation, the great events of this reign were the rejection of the Pope's authority in England, and the translation of the whole of the Scriptures into the English tongue. When the first edition came out, Cranmer wrote to Cromwell, saying, that " he rejoiced to see this day of reformation, which he concluded was now risen in England, since the light of God's Word did shine over it without a cloud."

Edward VI. was only ten years old when he succeeded to the crown, but possessed talents and learning far beyond his years. His maternal uncle, Edward Seymour, now created Duke of Somerset, was appointed protector of

the realm, and guardian of the King's person. He was a decided supporter of the principles of the Reformation, but his character was stained with vanity and rapacity. The Archbishop continued in the Primacy, and in the year 1547 procured an order of council for a new visitation of the dioceses to inquire into the discipline and religious practices of the Bishops, clergy and people. The inquiry with regard to the bishops was to see whether any of them had neglected to preach against the Pope's supremacy ; that with regard to the clergy was much the same, with the addition of a few other matters ; and that with regard to the people was to ascertain whether they still continued to practise any idle ceremonies and charms.

Church and abbey lands still continued to be the prey of those in power, and Cranmer, wisely judging that the only way to check this plunder was by placing the Church and its services, its faith and discipline, on the solid basis of Gospel truth and primitive order, procured an Act of Parliament sanctioning the administration of the Holy Communion in

both kinds to the people, to whom the cup had been refused for more than two hundred years ; and he also caused an English service to be published for it, which was the first step towards the Book of Common Prayer.

In preparing the new services for the Church of England, Cranmer consulted all those Bishops and divines whose learning and attainments commended them as counsellors ; but his chief assistance was derived from Ridley, who was now Bishop of Rochester. The first reformed liturgy having been completed, was solemnly performed at St. Paul's Cathedral, and at most other churches in the kingdom, on Whitsunday, 1549, a day not unfitly chosen for the occasion.

The See of Rome was not idle during the progress of these matters, and a council was summoned to meet at Trent, in order to counteract the reformation which was spreading over Europe. On the other hand, Cranmer caused a Royal commission to be issued in England, through which he, with the assistance of Bishop Ridley, drew up those Articles which are still the acknowledged laws of the

doctrines of our Church. They were originally forty-two, but were reduced to thirty-nine after the accession of Queen Elizabeth.

In the same year another Liturgy, varying in some respects from the former one was published by Royal authority. The plunder by those in power continued throughout the reign of Edward VI.; and those who were desirous of reconstructing the Church had greater difficulties to encounter in this reign than they had in that of Henry VIII. The poor continued to be great sufferers, and misery and distress prevailed in every quarter. The result of this was several rebellions and risings of the people, which were at length put down with a great loss of life.

In the year 1553, King Edward died of consumption, and was succeeded by his sister, Queen Mary. Her reign was soon troubled by the unhappy claim of Lady Jane Grey to the crown, which was seized in her behalf, but contrary to her wishes. She and her youthful husband fell victims to the misguided zeal of their friends, who had been encouraged by the

will which Edward had made, in which he excluded his sister Mary from the succession to the throne. Cranmer and Ridley, having taken the part of Lady Jane, incurred the displeasure of the Queen, and were committed to prison on a charge of high treason.

All that had been done in the preceding reign in favor of the Reformation was abolished, and many fled to the continent, to avoid the dangers with which they were now threatened. After the Queen's marriage with Philip of Spain, all the cruelties of Henry's reign were renewed, and those who had taken a leading part in purifying our holy religion fell victims to the circumstances in which they were placed.

These bloody scenes terminated with the death of the Queen, which took place in the year 1558; and the great work of the Reformation was completed by her sister, Queen Elizabeth, who succeeded to the throne.


The first years of Elizabeth's reign were harassed by plots and conspiracies; and as these were chiefly the work of Romanists, who had the sanction of the

Pope for their conduct, the just punishment which the enemies of the Queen received might have the appearance of persecution on account of religion, but it was no such thing ; they suffered for political crimes, not for religious opinions.

Again the service of the Church was performed in the English language, and the Bible made accessible to every one who sought for it ; and that great work received its completion which we have the happiness to enjoy.

The Church of England.

"Where'er I roam, in this fair English land,
The vision of a temple meets mine eyes;
Modest without; within, all glorious rise
Its love-enclust'ered columns, and expand
Their slender arms. Like olive plants they stand,
Each answering each, in home's soft sympathies,
Sisters and brothers."

HE early history of the Church of England is involved in much obscurity; and we can obtain no certain information about it until long after Christianity had been introduced into the kingdom. When, or by whom the Gospel was first preached among the Britons is not known. They had been conquered by the Romans under Julius Cæsar, rather more than fifty years before the birth of Jesus Christ, and remained under their dominion nearly five hundred years. Although the Romans introduced a certain degree of civilization among them, they only changed their religious worship from one set of idols to another.

But, notwithstanding this, we have reason for believing that Christianity was brought to these shores not many years after the death of our Blessed Lord. Saint Paul is said to have travelled to the furthest bounds of the West, and in the course of his journey to have visited these islands.

Whether, however, it were St. Paul himself, or whether it were any other Apostolical missionary, the fact is known that the glad tidings of salvation were at this early period proclaimed to the inhabitants of the British Isles. The persecutions which raged against the Christian religion, and which I have already described, were less severe in Britain than in other parts of the world; but still, their effects were felt; and Alban, a Roman officer, who resided at Verulam, since called by his name, was enrolled in the noble army of Martyrs.

But when Constantine came to the throne, there was an end of these cruelties, and the Christian religion was very generally embraced. The temples in which incense was formerly burnt to Cæsar, now echoed with

hymns to God, and the high priests of Jupiter had given place to the Bishops of Jesus Christ. Constantine was a native of Britain ; he was the son of St. Helena, a British lady ; and he honored British Bishops, by sending for them to attend at Councils held by his authority for settling the true Faith. These happy days were overclouded by the false doctrines of Arius, to whom I have before alluded ; and soon afterwards, a man named Morgan, or, as he is commonly called, Pelagius, taught doctrines which overthrew the necessity of God's grace, and made human nature sufficient for itself. But a public Council which was called at Verulam, condemned these doctrines, and its decision was received with shouts of joy by the assembled people.

Still greater troubles, however, awaited the Church in Britain. The Roman Empire, being harassed on every side, was compelled to give up her distant provinces ; and the Britons, being left to themselves, soon fell into the hands of the Saxons, who, being heathens, endeavored to destroy every trace of Christianity. To a great extent, they suc-

ceeded ; but there still remained a faithful remnant in the fastnesses of Wales, and a few ruined churches were in existence when Christianity was again brought to the island by Augustine, in the year 596. He was sent by Gregory the Great, whose attention had been arrested in the slave-market at Rome by some beautiful youths, who had been brought from the northern part of Britain. Augustine, and forty companions landed in Kent, of which Ethelbert was king. At first the king refused to allow the missionaries to come into his presence ; but being persuaded by his wife, Bertha, who was the daughter of a Christian king, he consented to receive them in the open air. They approached him chanting the Litany, and bearing before them a silver cross, and a banner on which our Saviour was painted. The king listened to their address, and saying that they spoke good words, and made fair promises, he gave them a dwelling in the city of Canterbury. The Queen had previously restored the ruined church of St. Martin, at Canterbury, for her own devotions, and this she gave to

Augustine. The zeal and holy lives of the missionaries had great effect upon the minds of the people ; and at length the king himself became a convert to the Christian religion.

Within little more than a year after Augustine arrived in Kent, upwards of ten thousand of the English had been baptized; and Augustine, seeing the zeal with which Christianity was received, went to the Archbishop of Arles, in France, to receive consecration as the first Bishop of the English Church. In taking this step he was guided by the advice of Gregory, who was a great benefactor of the English Church, and to whom we are indebted for a great portion of our Prayer Book.

All England was now at peace, and the authority of Ethelbert reached from Canterbury to Chester, and the borders of Wales. Bordering on Mercia in this direction, stood the great monastery of Bangor-Iscoed,* the chief nursery of the Church which still remained in Wales. Augustine made a journey towards this

*So called to distinguish it from Bangor, in Caernarvonshire.

place, and invited the Bishops and some learned men to a conference with him on the banks of the river Severn, at a spot which was long after called Augustine's Oak.

Seven Bishops, together with some of the monks of Bangor, and Dunod, their Abbat, accepted his invitation. When they met, Augustine said, that if they would consent to three things, he would give them the right hand of fellowship. "For," said he, "you have many practices which are against the custom of the whole Church. But if you will keep Easter at the proper time; if you will celebrate the rite of Baptism as the holy Apostolic Church of Rome does; and if you will join us in preaching the Word of God to the Anglo Saxons, we will bear with all other things." It appears from this, that the ancient Church in Britain followed the custom of the Eastern Church; but it was certainly desirable that all the Churches throughout this land should observe the festival of Easter on the same day. It was, however, unbecoming in Augustine thus to dictate; he ought rather to have con-

formed to the usages of the others than call upon them to follow his mode of worship. His proposal was at once refused, and he departed from the conference in great sorrow at failing to procure that union on which his mind was fixed. "I foresee," said he, "that if you will not have peace with brethren, you will have war with foes; and if you will not preach the way of Life to the English you will suffer deadly vengeance at their hands."

This was afterwards regarded as prophetic ; for when Ethelfrid, king of Northumberland, made war on the Welsh, a few years later, the monks of Bangor stood on an eminence, praying for the success of their countrymen ; and being observed by the Pagan king, he ordered them to be put to death. Twelve hundred of them are said to have perished, and not more than fifty to have escaped from this cruel slaughter.

On the death of Ethelbert, the newly founded English Church was exposed to much danger, as his son and successor, Edbald, had refused to be instructed in the Christian Faith; but through the ex-

ertions of Archbishop Laurence, who succeeded Augustine, the danger was averted, and the king received the rite of Baptism. Christianity was spread through the northern part of the island, in consequence of Edwin, king of Northumbria, who was baptized by Paulinus, employing his authority to promote it. His zeal was not confined to his own people, but whenever he had an opportunity, he encouraged others to receive it.

As long as Edwin lived, the country enjoyed a prosperous state of peace. At length, however, the rivalry of other kingdoms causing a war to be stirred up against Edwin, he unfortunately lost his life, and again the Church was deprived of a powerful protector.

Long before these times, Christianity had found a refuge among the Picts and Scots, in the monasteries which had been founded. Of these holy places, none attained greater celebrity than Iona. It was from this monastery that St. Aidan came, whose exertions in the cause of the Gospel were crowned with remarkable success. He was sent for by Oswald, who, on the death of Edwin became Bret-

walder, or chief of the petty kings of Britain, and who contributed in no small degree to the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church. This Church was presided over by men of great piety and deep learning; and before the time of the Norman Conquest, it was firmly rooted in every part of the island. Monasteries were founded, and missionaries were sent forth to other countries, to teach those truths which after many a struggle had, through the Providence of God, found a permanent home in England. For a time, indeed, the Danes were permitted to harass the land, and to throw a gloom over the Church, but this was of short continuance. The genius of Alfred, one of Britain's wisest kings, prevailed; he in a great degree was the founder of that state of things of which we are now receiving the fruits, and which justify the title which has been awarded him, of being "the Great."

Some changes necessarily took place when William the First obtained the crown by his sword. The Pope availed himself of the situation of William to advance those pretensions which at length

terminated in the thralldom of the English Church. The frame of society was broken up by the Conquest, and this was one of the causes which led to the foundation of so many Norman monasteries. The monastic system had for ages been in existence in these islands, but not to the extent to which it afterwards prevailed. After the Conquest a few Saxon bishops were allowed to remain in their sees, but the greater part of them, together with Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, were deprived ; and for nearly a century after, not a single Saxon was promoted to any bishopric, or other eminent place in the Church ; all these being filled by Normans, few of whom could even speak English ! The preachers were for the most part Saxon monks, who wandered over the moors to the villages which lay within reach of their monasteries. Before the Norman Conquest the people had been accustomed to hear the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Psalms in their own tongue, but now through the influence of the Church of Rome the whole public service was performed in Latin. The

monasteries had their full share of the miseries of these times, and while the King robbed them of their treasures his barons deprived them of their lands. Being opposed to the changes which were taking place, they offered resistance to the introduction of the new service, and at Glastonbury three monks were shot in a fray which arose from this, and eighteen more wounded. At length, however, the Salisbury Missal was compiled from the old services, which contained some of the prayers which have still a place in our Prayer Book, and was in general use up to the time of the Reformation. When the Conqueror removed Stigand from the Primacy he appointed Lanfranc, a native of Italy, to succeed him ; and the Church derived great benefit from the wise and conciliatory counsels of this prelate. He was succeeded by Anselm, who received the appointment from William Rufus, four years after the death of Lanfranc. It would probably have been delayed much longer had not the King been seized by a fit of illness, which alarmed his conscience. But in those days Church

lands were unmercifully plundered, and when an abbey or a see became vacant, it was a common practice to defer making any appointment, and the sovereign in the meanwhile appropriated their revenues to his own use. When Henry the First came to the throne he issued a charter, promising full amendments of the grievances inflicted by Rufus, but he forgot to act upon it when he felt himself secure on his throne.

Up to this time the Church of England continued independent of the Church of Rome. Anselm acknowledged the Pope to be the highest Bishop in the Church, and on this account to have the investiture of the Archbishops, but not to interfere with the election of Bishops, or to give laws to the Church of England. The Church in England was under a head of its own; governed by the King in temporal, and by the Archbishop in spiritual matters. In an evil hour this independence was surrendered by the successor of Anselm, and was not recovered until the Reformation. During the reign of Stephen, the Church suffered in common with the whole country. The

old chronicles in describing these times, after relating the excessive cruelty which was practised by the powerful in the castles which were so greatly multiplied at this period, said "Never did heathen men worse than they did: for after a time they spared neither church nor churchyard, but took all the goods that were therein, and then burned the church and all together. Neither did they spare a bishop's land nor an abbot's, nor a priest's, but plundered both monks and clerks To till the ground was to plough the sea; the earth bare no corn, for the land was all laid waste by such deeds; and they said openly that Christ slept, and His Saints. Such things, and more than we can say, suffered we nineteen winters for our sins." *

The following reign was disgraced by the barbarous murder of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, before the altar of God in the Cathedral at Canterbury. He had incurred the King's displeasure by resisting an attempt which Henry was making to enslave the

* Sax. Chron. A. D. 1137.

Church of England, and to make it subject to his own despotic will. When the Conqueror destroyed many of the institutions which he found established, he left the Church free ; and directed that it should be governed by its own laws, as it had been in Saxon times. This liberty Henry sought to destroy, and by losing his life in such a cause the Archbishop was canonized. It is well known that he was murdered by four knights of King Henry's court, who hearing their master complain that no one would avenge him against a turbulent priest, bound themselves to do so ; and hewed him down with their swords on the steps of an altar when he was about to minister. The King expressed much grief at what had occurred, and submitted to the most humbling penance at Becket's tomb to manifest his sorrow for the angry speech which had prompted the murder. The authors of it first retired to Yorkshire, but finding themselves to be objects of universal aversion, they went to Rome, from whence the Pope sent them on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where they spent the remainder of their lives.

We must not pass over in silence the name of Stephen Langton. He was the first person who divided the Bible into chapters as we now have it; and was a diligent preacher and commentator on Scripture.

When a dispute arose between King John and the monks of Canterbury about the election of an Archbishop, the Pope, taking the matter into his own hands, sent over Langton. He was, however, one who preferred the liberty of His Church and country to the interests of either Pope or King, and took a leading part in the efforts made by the barons to procure a better government, in the struggle in which Magna Charta was obtained.* Langton was also distinguished for taking a lead in another cause, which was less reputable; and that was in assisting Pope Gregory VII. to bind the clergy to a single life. This harsh measure, which was productive of much scandal in the Church, was in full force until the time of the Reformation,—that is for a period of about three hundred years. During this time the Pope's au-

* Early English Church, p. 343.

thority was frequently exercised, and those corruptions which were received and maintained at Rome were admitted into England, and defiled that pure religion which had once prevailed within her shores.

I have already described to you the means by which our Church was at length liberated from the usurpation of Rome, and purified from the errors and false doctrines which had so long prevailed. The doctrines and discipline which were then firmly established have continued ever since, with the exception of a few years in the middle of the seventeenth century, when violent and wicked men overthrew the Church and constitution of the kingdom. Those were indeed sad times, and the Clergy, and many who fondly clung to the religion of their forefathers, suffered great hardships.

These troubles had lasted about twenty years, when the good Providence of God put an end to them. The monarchy was restored, and the voice of prayer and thanksgiving was again heard in the churches; and those who survived the

cruel persecution to which they were exposed, returned to their homes. The restoration took place in the year 1660, Soon afterwards a commission was issued by King Charles II., empowering twelve Bishops and twelve Presbyterian divines to consider various objections which were made to the Liturgy. This conference was held at the Savoy, and is commonly called the Savoy Conference. It did not produce any union. Some few alterations were made which, having been adopted by Convocation, and submitted to Parliament, received the Royal assent on the 16th of May, 1662, and the Prayer Book which was thus confirmed is what we now use ; and which we ought to value as a precious gift of Him by Whom alone kings reign and princes decree justice : * and through Whose Providence it is the voice of our branch of the holy Church, throughout the world acknowledging Him.

* Prov. viii. 15.

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